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In the opinion of the Standing Committee the question of introducing democratic institutions in the States is of urgent and vital importance, so that the people of the States might take their proper place in the shaping of a free and independent India and in the new world order to come. The committee therefore invite the various Rulers to declare that they accept the objective of full responsible government in their States and undertake to give effect to it, in the largest possible measure, in the immediate future. The new repressive legislation should be suspended and civil liberty allowed. India may be legally at war but there are no war conditions anywhere near India and certainly not in the States, which can justify the application of extreme measures of repression.

The Standing Committee desire to make it clear that the Rulers can expect no co-operation from the people unless these fundamental changes are made and the governance of the States is carried on with popular consent and through popular representatives.

The Committee send their greetings to the peoples of many States who are carrying on, with courage and fortitude, their struggle for democratic freedom and civil liberty. This struggle must inevitably become a part of the larger struggle for Indian freedom and for that the people should prepare.

## 16

### GANDHIJ'S COMMENT ON 'THE A. I. C. C. RESOLUTION

*October 13, 1939*

I regard the recent resolution of the A. I. C. C. on the situation as moderate and wise. It was bound to reiterate the

voice to the demand of the Indian people for democratic freedom. In this freedom to come the people of the States must be equal sharers and they must be prepared to shoulder equal responsibilities.

The immediate cause of this war in Europe was Nazi aggression and the Western allies have proclaimed that they are fighting in the cause of democracy, freedom and self-determination. With these objectives the Standing Committee is in full agreement but it is incumbent that these objectives should be clarified and applied to countries outside Europe and especially to India. The Standing Committee therefore associate themselves with the request made by the National Congress to the British Government for a full and unequivocal statement of Britain's war and peace aims. These aims should be applicable to the people of the Indian States also, who live under an autocratic system which is more reactionary than even the Nazi regime against which Britain is fighting. As the Congress Working Committee has stated, "the British Government in India is more responsible for this autocracy than even the Rulers themselves, as has been made painfully evident during the past year." To support this system in India is the very negation of democracy and all that Great Britain is said to stand for in the war.

Many of the Rulers of Indian States have offered their services and resources to Great Britain for the prosecution of the war and have expressed their support of the cause of democracy in Europe. It is incongruous in the extreme that such professions should be made while undiluted autocracy prevails in the States. The rulers have not in any way sought to consult their people before offering the resources of their States or committing themselves to the war. The Standing Committee, speaking on behalf of the people of the Indian States, cannot accept this commitment, or agree to this continuation of autocracy in the States because war has broken out in Europe.

The Committee notes that the war has already been used for the purpose of introducing new and stringent repressive measures and putting an end to civil liberty in many of the States. In some states, promised reforms in the administration have been deliberately postponed because of

the war. A war, ostensibly for democracy, is thus resulting in greater autocracy and repression in the States and in stopping all advance. The people of the States express their strongest protest against this and are wholly unable to give their support to the war under these conditions. They may have to resist impositions forced down upon them.

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## INTRODUCTION

This pamphlet has been prepared by the A. I. C. C. Office to facilitate the understanding of the stand taken by the Congress with reference to the present war in Europe. It records (1) all the resolutions passed by the Working Committee and the A. I. C. C. on the political situation ever since the war began, (2) the statements made on behalf of the British Government here and in England, (3) the Indian reaction to these statements as evidenced by the utterances of Gandhiji, the President and the other Congress leaders, and (4) the war resolutions passed by the popular Assemblies in the Congress provinces. The resolutions of the Jamiat-ul-Ulma and the Muslim League are given as appendices. The matter is arranged chronologically.

The case for India stands on unassailable moral and political grounds. Even before the war began Indian troops were sent to Singapur and Egypt without the consent of the Central Assembly. As a protest the Congress party decided to refrain from attending the next session of the Assembly. With the commencement of war in Europe, India was declared a belligerent country without her consent, in spite of the fact that all other countries in the Empire, Australia, South Africa, Canada, Newzealand, Ireland were allowed to settle the question of participation in war by the free vote of their respective legislatures without any interference from the British Government. The last named country, Ireland, in spite of its strategic position for the defence of Great Britain is allowed to remain neutral. Then the Government of India Act was so amended as to make it possible for the Central Government to interfere in the administration of the provinces without any reference to the provincial Governments, depriving provincial autonomy of whatever little significance it had. Stringent ordinances were passed curtailing the civil liberties of the people and putting restrictions on the press without the least regard to the needs and wishes of the people of India.

After committing all these arbitrary acts, the British Government thought it proper to approach Indian leaders for co-operation in the war, through the Viceroy. India has often declared its opposition to Nazism and Fascism. Its sympathies have all along been with the Democratic countries. It was therefore prepared to help. It was not however possible for it to do this unless its shackles were removed. It would be ridiculous for a slave country to take up cudgels for the liberty of other nations. The Working Committee therefore on September 14th issued a statement reiterating its faith in Democracy and its disapproval of Fascism and Nazism. At the same time the statement made it clear that it was equally opposed to imperialism. If therefore England wanted the free and willing help of India, it must clearly declare its war aims, specially with reference to India, and must pledge itself at the earliest opportunity, after the war, to allow India to frame her own democratic constitution by means of a Constituent Assembly. As an earnest of its intentions the Government should immediately associate Indian public opinion, to the largest possible measure consistent with circumstances, with the task of administration and the successful prosecution of the war.

To enable the British Government to frame a suitable reply to the simple questions the Working Committee had asked, the Viceroy had recourse to as many as 52 interviews with leaders of real and imaginary parties and groups in India. Inspired by these illuminating conferences the Viceroy declared in no uncertain terms the Imperial will of Britain. This will was couched in the usual rigid official language of imperialism and showed neither understanding nor imagination. India, for its goal, was referred to an antediluvian and out-of-date declaration made in 1917 that after 18 years had produced the Government of India Act of 1935. Britain had nothing more or better to offer. As for its war aims we were referred to a speech of the British Premier which had reference only to Europe and none to India. In the words of Gandhiji the Congress asked for bread and was given a stone.

The Viceroy's declaration met with a chorus of adverse criticism even from non-congress circles. To retrieve the position, the Indian Secretary and Sir Samuel Hoare spoke in

the houses of Parliament. They employed sweeter language but in effect said the same things that had been badly said by the Viceroy. As a result of these statements the Viceroy called Gandhiji, the Congress President and Mr. Jinnah for interviews. He told the visitors that he was prepared to modify his previous statement to the extent that instead of an advisory committee for the conduct of war, his Government was prepared to expand the Executive Council of the Viceroy and find in it place for some popular leaders, on condition that the Congress came to an agreement with Mr. Jinnah not only about the proposed changes in the Central Executive but also about the Government in the provinces. There was no mention of war aims or the freedom of India to frame her own constitution. These issues were sought to be clouded by the offer of membership of the Executive Council hedged in with the condition of agreement with Mr. Jinnah about questions that had little relevance to the questions raised by the Congress. Babu Rajendra Prasad, therefore, on behalf of the Congress, made it plain to the Viceroy that it was not possible for Congress to cooperate unless the policy of the British Government was made clear on the lines suggested by the Congress. He added "It has pained us to find the communal question dragged in this connection. It has been repeatedly said on behalf of the Congress that it is our earnest desire to settle the points of communal controversy by agreement and we propose to continue our efforts to this end. But I would point out that this question does not in any respect come in the way of a declaration of Indian freedom as suggested above."

What is this minority question which is being exploited by the British Government? Muslims are not a minority throughout India. In several provinces they form a majority of the population. In the whole of India Muslims are not a political national or ethnic minority. They are not a community in the political sense of the term. A Muslim in the Punjab is a Punjabi as the Punjab premier is rightly proud to proclaim himself to be. One from Bengal is a Bengali and from Sindh is a Sindhi. Every Muslim in India belongs to one or the other historical sub-nationalities of India. The Muslims are therefore a religious group just like Hindus, Jain, Sikhs, Indian Christians etc. As such they can with justice

claim safeguards for the protection of their religion, culture, language, script and even their personal law. They can also claim a fair share in public administrative appointments. All this has been repeatedly guaranteed by the Congress. Their participation in political office can however be based not upon their religion but upon their being Indians and holding particular political opinions, and advocating certain political and economic policies. No minority, can however be allowed to stand in the way of the political and economic advance of the country. If religious denominations have their rights, political majorities too have their rights. It has never been recognised as one of the rights of denominational minorities or for the matter of that any minority in a democracy, to exercise a veto over the will of the nation to freedom and self-determination. India has several religious minorities. Is every one of them to have a right to thwart the will of the nation or is exception to be made only in favour of the Muslim League? As a matter of fact the British Government have left no majority in India. According to it the Muslims are a minority, the scheduled castes are a minority, the Sikhs, Parsis, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, Europeans, the princes are all minorities, nay even women are a minority. The non-Brahmans and the Marhattas are minorities. The only majority left are the Brahmans bereft of their women folk. Arithmetic is out of place in this imperial calculation. But minority rights have never stood in the way, whenever England has been obliged to part with power. It did not allow minority considerations to weigh with her while conceding self-determination to South Africa, though the war with the Boers was ostensibly fought for the protection of the minorities. But it appears that principles that are good for the rest of the British Empire are not good enough for India. The British are no doubt an amiable people. They are liberal and philanthropic in their own way. But their anxiety, from 6,000 miles, for the Muslim minority in India, as against the Congress, may not convince even Mr. Jinnah. It very perilously looks like the wolf's anxiety for the safety of the goat against a bigger member of its own (Latter's) fraternity. The Congress has therefore rightly repudiated the idea that a declaration of war aims and the calling of a Constituent Assembly after the war, are depen-

dent upon an understanding with Mr. Jinnah.

Apart from this the British Government knows full well that Mr. Jinnah does not exclusively represent the Muslim community. There are the national Muslims, the Jamiat-ul-Ulma, the Ahraras, the Shias and the Momins. Then there are the Muslims of the Frontier province and Sindh who have repudiated the leadership of the League. These singly and together nullify the League's claim to represent the entire Muslim community solely and exclusively. If yet a refutation of their claim is needed it is conclusively furnished by the following table, showing the results of the last provincial Assembly elections under the 1935 Act:—

Provinces	Elected on League ticket	Muslim seats
Madras .. .. .	10	28
Bombay .. .. .	20	29
Bengal . . . . .	39	117
U. P. .. .. .	27	64
Punjab .. .. .	1	84
Bihar .. .. .	nil	39
C. P. .. .. .	nil	14
Assam .. .. .	9	34
N.-W. F. P. .. .. .	nil	36
Orissa .. .. .	nil	4
Sind .. .. .	nil	36
	<hr/> 106	<hr/> 1485

It will be seen that only in Bombay did the Muslim League capture a majority of Muslim seats.

However, the minority problem as it exists today in India is the artificial creation of the British Government. Its origin lies in the traditional policy of balance and counterpoise pursued by British Imperialism throughout its history in India. Counterpoise now for several decades has taken the shape of communal electorates. It therefore lies ill in the mouth of the spokesmen of that imperialism to remind us as Lord Zetland did that "I am convinced that so long as legislatures are divided on communal rather than on political lines, so long will serious difficulty be experienced in the working of

democratic institutions with success." If what the noble Lord says is true that "what we have to aim at is a state of affairs under which the legislator will think of himself as an Indian first and a Hindu or Muslim afterwards", is it not time for him to address himself to the rectification of the evil done to Indian nationalism by the communal decision of the British Government? The Congress and national opposition to communal electorates is well known. They have always pleaded and pleaded in vain, for joint electorates.

If, in spite of all this, the declaration of war aims and the framing by the Indians of their own constitution through a Constituent Assembly chosen on adult or near adult suffrage, is made dependent upon the agreement of one denominational minority, the country is entitled to conclude that this is a mere cloak and that even at this time of peril, imperialism is reluctant to part with power and come to terms with India. Nazi Germany, at a pinch, can come to terms with Communist Russia but not England with India.

The word has therefore gone forth that the country must prepare for a grim struggle to wrest power from the unwilling and unjust hands of imperialism. The Congress by its creed is pledged to non-violence. But however patient and long suffering a satyagrahi soldier may be, and however low, consistent with justice and fair play he may pitch his demands, he may not refuse the oft repeated challenge of naked might. If Britain refuses to allow India to mould her destiny, according to her own will and genius, it must be understood that she is not out to make the world safe for democracy but to make it safe for herself and her imperial allies. This would be to repeat the criminal folly of the treaty of Versailles and can only lead the world to a greater disaster than the present one. "The wages of sin is death."

J. B. KRIPALANI  
*General Secretary*

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1

## GANDHIJI'S MESSAGE TO THE POLISH PEOPLE

To all those in Poland who believe that only truth and love can be foundations of better days for humanity and who are doing their best to serve those ideals with their life, I send my good wishes and blessings.

2

## DECLARATION OF WAR

On the 3rd of September England declared War on Germany, the latter having invaded Poland.

3

*Gandhiji issued the following statement after his first interview with the Viceroy on September 5, 1939.*

## THE SIMLA VISIT

At Delhi, as I was entraining for Kalka, a big crowd sang in perfect good humour, to the worn-out refrain of 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai'. 'We do not want any understanding'. I had then my weekly silence. Therefore I merely smiled. And those who were standing on the footboard returned the smile with their smile, whilst they were admonishing me not to have any understanding with the Viceroy. I had also a letter from a Congress Committee giving me similar warning. Neither of these counsellors knew me. I did not need the warning to know my limitations. Apart from the Delhi demonstration and a Congress Committee's warning, it is my duty to tell the public what happened at

the interview with H. E. the Viceroy.

I knew that I had no authority to speak for myself. I had no instructions whatsoever from the Working Committee in the matter. I had answered a telegraphic invitation and taken the first train I could catch. And what is more, with my irrepressible and out and out non-violence, I knew that I could not represent the national mind and I should cut a sorry figure if I tried to do so. I told His Excellency as much. Therefore there could be no question of any understanding or negotiation with me. Nor, I saw, had he sent for me to negotiate. I have returned from the Viceregal Lodge empty handed and without any understanding, open or secret. If there is to be any, it would be between the Congress and the Government.

Having, therefore, made my position vis-a-vis the Congress quite clear, I told His Excellency that my own sympathies were with England and France from the purely humanitarian standpoint. I told him that I could not contemplate without being stirred to the very depth, the destruction of London which had hitherto been regarded as impregnable. And as I was picturing before him the Houses of Parliament and the Westminster Abbey and their possible destruction, I broke down. I have become disconsolate. In the secret of my heart I am in perpetual quarrel with God that he should allow such things to go on. My non-violence seems almost impotent. But the answer comes at the end of the daily quarrel that neither God nor non-violence is impotent. Impotence is in men. I must try on without losing faith even though I may break in the attempt.

And so, as though in anticipation of the agony that was awaiting me, I sent on July 23 from Abbottabad the following letter to Herr Hitler:

"Friends have been urging me to write to you for the sake of humanity. But I have resisted their request because of the feeling that any letter from me would be an impertinence. Something tells me that I must not calculate and that I must make my appeal for whatever it may be worth.

It is quite clear that you are today the one person in the world who can prevent a war which may reduce humanity to the savage state. Must you pay that price for an object, however worthy it may appear to you to be? Will you listen

to the appeal of one who has deliberately shunned the method of war not without considerable success?

Any way I anticipate your forgiveness, if I have erred in writing to you."

How I wish that even now he would listen to reason and the appeal from almost the whole of thinking mankind, not excluding the German people themselves. I must refuse to believe that Germans contemplate with equanimity the evacuation of big cities like London for fear of destruction to be wrought by man's inhuman ingenuity. They cannot contemplate with equanimity such destruction of themselves and their own monuments. I am not therefore just now thinking of India's deliverance. It will come, but what will it be worth if England and France fall, or if they come out victorious over Germany ruined and humbled?

Yet it almost seems as if Herr Hitler knows no God but brute force and, as Mr. Chamberlain says, he will listen to nothing else. It is in the midst of this catastrophe without parallel that Congressmen and all other responsible Indians individually and collectively have to decide what part India is to play in this terrible drama.

#### 4

### SOURCE OF MY SYMPATHY

By M. K. GANDHI

*Harijan, September 11, 1939*

The statement made by me just after my interview with H. E. the Viceroy has had a mixed reception. It has been described as sentimental twaddle by one critic and as a statesmanlike pronouncement by another. There are variations between the two extremes. I suppose all the critics are right from their own standpoint and all are wrong from the absolute standpoint which in this instance is that of the author. He wrote for nobody's satisfaction but his own. I abide by every word I have said in it. It has no political value, except what every humanitarian opinion may possess. Interrelation of ideas cannot be prevented.

I have a spirited protest from a correspondent. It calls for a reply. I do not reproduce the letter as parts of it I do not understand myself. But there is no difficulty in catching its drift. The main argument is this:

"If you shed tears over the possible destruction of the English Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey, have you no tears for the possible destruction of the monuments of Germany? And why do you sympathize with England and France and not with Germany? Is not Hitler an answer to the ravishing of Germany by the Allied Powers during the last war? If you were a German, had the resourcefulness of Hitler, and were a believer in the doctrine of retaliation as the whole world is, you would have done what Hitler is doing. Nazism may be bad. We do not know what it really is. The literature we get is one-sided. But I suggest to you that there is no difference between Chamberlain and Hitler. In Hitler's place Chamberlain would not have acted otherwise. You have done an injustice to Hitler by comparing him with Chamberlain, to the former's disadvantage. Is England's record in India any better than Hitler's in another part of the world in similar circumstances? Hitler is but an infant pupil of the old imperialist England and France. I fancy that your emotion at the Viceregal Lodge had the better of your judgment."

No one perhaps has described English misdeeds more forcibly, subject to truth, than I have. No one has resisted England more effectively, perhaps, than I have. And my desire for and power of resistance remain unabated. But there are seasons for speech and action, as there are seasons for silence and inaction.

In the dictionary of Satyagraha there is no enemy. But as I have no desire to prepare a new dictionary for Satyagrahis, I use the old words giving them a new meaning. A Satyagrahi loves his so-called enemy even as his friend. He owns no enemy. As a Satyagrahi, i.e., votary of ahimsa, I must wish well to England. My wishes regarding Germany were, and they still are, irrelevant for the moment. But I have said in a few words in my statement that I would not care to erect the freedom of my country on the remains of despoiled Germany. I should be as much moved by a contemplation of the possible destruction of Germany's monu-

ments. Herr Hitler stands in no need of my sympathy. In assessing the present merits, the past misdeeds of England and the good deeds of Germany are irrelevant. Rightly or wrongly, and irrespective of what the other Powers have done before under similar circumstances, I have come to the conclusion that Herr Hitler is responsible for the war. I do not judge his claim. It is highly probable that his right to incorporate Danzig in Germany is beyond question, if the Danzig Germans desire to give up their independent status. It may be that his claim to appropriate the Polish Corridor is a just claim. My complaint is that he will not let the claim be examined by an independent tribunal. It is no answer to the rejection of the appeal for submission to arbitration that it came from interested quarters. Even a thief may conceivably make a correct appeal to his fellow-thief. I think I am right in saying that the whole world was anxious that Herr Hitler should allow his demand to be examined by an impartial tribunal. If he succeeds in his design, his success will be no proof of the justness of his claim. It will be proof that the Law of the Jungle is still a great force in human affairs. It will be one more proof that though we humans have changed the form we have not changed the manners of the beast.

I hope it is now clear to my critics that my sympathy for England and France is not a result of momentary emotion or, in cruder language, of hysteria. It is derived from the never-drying fountain of non-violence which my breast has nursed for fifty years. I claim no infallibility for my judgment. All I claim is that my sympathy for England and France is reasoned. I invite those who accept the premises on which my sympathy is based to join me. What shape it should take is another matter. Alone I can but pray. And so I told His Excellency that my sympathy had no concrete value in the face of the concrete destruction that is facing those who are directly engaged in the war.

Segaon, 11-9-39.

## WORKING COMMITTEE'S STATEMENT ON WAR CRISIS

*Statement issued by the Congress Working Committee at Wardha on September 14, 1939 in regard to the War Crisis and India.*

The Working Committee have given their earnest consideration to the grave crisis that has developed owing to the declaration of war in Europe. The principles which should guide the nation in the event of war have been repeatedly laid down by the Congress, and only a month ago this Committee reiterated them and expressed their displeasure at the flouting of Indian opinion by the British Government in India. As a first step to dissociate themselves from this policy of the British Government, the Committee called upon the Congress members of the Central Legislative Assembly to refrain from attending the next session. Since then the British Government have declared India as a belligerent country, promulgated Ordinances, passed the Government of India Act amending Bill, and taken other far-reaching measures which affect the Indian people vitally, and circumscribe and limit the powers and activities of the provincial governments. This has been done without the consent of the Indian people whose declared wishes in such matters have been deliberately ignored by the British Government. The Working Committee must take the gravest view of these developments.

The Congress has repeatedly declared its entire disapproval of the ideology and practice of Fascism and Nazism and their glorification of war and violence and the suppression of the human spirit. It has condemned the aggression in which they have repeatedly indulged and their sweeping away of well-established principles and recognised standards of civilised behaviour. It has seen in Fascism and Nazism the intensification of the principle of Imperialism against which the Indian people have struggled for many years. The Working Committee must therefore unhesitatingly condemn the latest aggression of the Nazi Government in

Germany against Poland and sympathise with those who resist it.

The Congress has further laid down that the issue of war and peace for India must be decided by the Indian people, and no outside authority can impose this decision upon them, nor can the Indian people permit their resources to be exploited for Imperialist ends. Any imposed decision, or attempt to use India's resources, for purposes not approved by them, will necessarily have to be opposed by them. If co-operation is desired in a worthy cause, this cannot be obtained by compulsion and imposition, and the Committee cannot agree to the carrying out by the Indian people of orders issued by external authority. Co-operation must be between equals by mutual consent for a cause which both consider to be worthy. The people of India have in the recent past, faced great risks and willingly made great sacrifices to secure their own freedom and establish a free democratic state in India, and their sympathy is entirely on the side of democracy and freedom. But India cannot associate herself in a war said to be for democratic freedom when that very freedom is denied to her and such limited freedom as she possesses taken away from her.

The Committee are aware that the Governments of Great Britain and France have declared that they are fighting for democracy and freedom and to put an end to aggression. But the history of the recent past is full of examples showing the constant divergence between the spoken word, the ideals proclaimed, and the real motives and objectives. During the war of 1914-18, the declared war aims were preservation of democracy, self-determination, and the freedom of small nations, and yet the very Governments which solemnly proclaimed these aims entered into secret treaties embodying imperialist designs for the carving up of the Ottoman Empire. While stating that they did not want any acquisition of territory, the victorious Powers added largely to their colonial domains. The present European war itself signifies the abject failure of the Treaty of Versailles and of its makers, who broke their pledged word and imposed an imperialist peace on the defeated nations. The one hopeful outcome of that Treaty, the League of Nations, was muzzled and strangled at the outset and later killed by its parent States.



Subsequent history has demonstrated afresh how even a seemingly fervent declaration of faith may be followed by an ignoble desertion. In Manchuria the British Government connived at aggression; in Abyssinia they acquiesced in it. In Czechoslovakia and Spain democracy was in peril and it was deliberately betrayed, and the whole system of collective security was sabotaged by the very powers who had previously declared their firm faith in it.

Again it is asserted that democracy is in danger and must be defended and with this statement the Committee are in entire agreement. The Committee believe that the peoples of the West are moved by this ideal and objective and for these they are prepared to make sacrifices. But again and again the ideals and sentiments of the people and of those who have sacrificed themselves in the struggle have been ignored and faith has not been kept with them.

If the War is to defend the '*status quo*', imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests and privilege, then India can have nothing to do with it. If, however, the issue is democracy and a world order based on democracy, then India is intensely interested in it. The Committee are convinced that the interests of Indian democracy do not conflict with the interests of British democracy or of world democracy. But there is an inherent and ineradicable conflict between democracy for India or elsewhere and Imperialism and Fascism. If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily end imperialism in her own possessions, establish full democracy in India, and the Indian people must have the right of self-determination by framing their own constitution through a Constituent Assembly without external interference, and must guide their own policy. A free democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression and for economic co-operation. She will work for the establishment of a real world order based on freedom and democracy, utilising the world's knowledge and resources for the progress and advancement of humanity.

The crisis that has overtaken Europe is not of Europe only but of humanity and will not pass like other crises or wars leaving the essential structure of the present day world

intact. It is likely to refashion the world for good or ill, politically, socially and economically. This crisis is the inevitable consequence of the social and political conflicts and contradictions which have grown alarmingly since the last Great War, and it will not be finally resolved till these conflicts and contradictions are removed and a new equilibrium established. That equilibrium can only be based on the ending of the domination and exploitation of one country by another, and on a reorganisation of economic relations on a juster basis for the common good of all. India is the crux of the problem, for India has been the outstanding example of modern imperialism and no refashioning of the world can succeed which ignores this vital problem. With her vast resources she must play an important part in any scheme of world reorganisation. But she can only do so as a free nation whose energies have been released to work for this great end. Freedom today is indivisible and every attempt to retain imperialist domination in any part of the world will lead inevitably to fresh disaster.

The Working Committee have noted that many Rulers of Indian States have offered their services and resources and expressed their desire to support the cause of democracy in Europe. If they must make their professions in favour of democracy abroad, the Committee would suggest that their first concern should be the introduction of democracy within their own States in which today undiluted autocracy reigns supreme. The British Government in India is more responsible for this autocracy than even the Rulers themselves, as has been made painfully evident during the past year. This policy is the very negation of democracy and of the new world order for which Great Britain claims to be fighting in Europe.

As the Working Committee view past events in Europe, Africa and Asia, and more particularly past and present occurrences in India, they fail to find any attempt to advance the cause of democracy or self-determination or any evidence that the present war declarations of the British Government are being or are going to be, acted upon. The true measure of democracy is the ending of Imperialism and Fascism alike and the aggression that has accompanied them in the past and the present. Only on that basis can a new order be built

up. In the struggle for that new world order, the Committee are eager and desirous to help in every way. But the Committee cannot associate themselves or offer any co-operation in a war which is conducted on imperialist lines and which is meant to consolidate imperialism in India and elsewhere.

In view, however, of the gravity of the occasion and the fact that the pace of events during the last few days has often been swifter than the working of men's minds, the Committee desire to take no final decision at the stage, so as to allow for the full elucidation of the issues at stake, the real objectives aimed at, and the position of India in the present and in the future. But the decision cannot long be delayed as India is being committed from day to day to a policy to which she is not a party and of which she disapproves.

The Working Committee therefore invite the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged, in particular, how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present. Do they include the elimination of imperialism and the treatment of India as a free nation whose policy will be guided in accordance with the wishes of her people? A clear declaration about the future, pledging the Government to the ending of Imperialism and Fascism alike will be welcomed by the people of all countries, but it is far more important to give immediate effect to it, to the largest possible extent, for only this will convince the people that the declaration is meant to be honoured. The real test of any declaration is its application in the present, for it is the present that will govern action today and give shape to the future.

War has broken out in Europe and the prospect is terrible to contemplate. But war has been taking its heavy toll of human life during recent years in Abyssinia, Spain and China. Innumerable innocent men, women and children have been bombed to death from the air in open cities, cold-blooded massacres, torture and utmost humiliation have followed each other in quick succession during these years of horror. That horror grows, and violence and the threat of violence shadow the world and, unless checked and ended,

will destroy the precious inheritance of past ages. That horror has to be checked in Europe and China, but it will not end till its root causes of Fascism and Imperialism are removed. To that end the Working Committee are prepared to give their co-operation. But it will be infinite tragedy if even this terrible war is carried on in the spirit of imperialism and for the purpose of retaining this structure which is itself the cause of war and human degradation.

The Working Committee wish to declare that the Indian people have no quarrel with the German people or the Japanese people or any other people. But they have a deep-rooted quarrel with systems which deny freedom and are based on violence and aggression. They do not look forward to a victory of one people over another or to a dictated peace, but to a victory of real democracy for all the people of all countries and a world freed from the night-mare of violence and imperialist oppression.

The Committee earnestly appeal to the Indian people to end all internal conflict and controversy and, in this grave hour of peril, to keep in readiness and hold together as a united nation, calm of purpose and determined to achieve the freedom of India within the larger freedom of the world.

## 6

### WAR COMMITTEE

*Working Committee, Wardha, September 1939*

In view of the situation arising out of the European War and the statement thereon issued by the Working Committee the Committee hereby appoint a Sub-Committee consisting of Shris Jawahar Lal Nehru (Chairman), Maulana Abul-kalam Azad and Shri Vallabhbhai Patel to deal with the questions in connection with the situation.

## GANDHIJI'S STATEMENT ON THE WORKING COMMITTEE MANIFESTO

The Working Committee's statement on the world crisis took four days before it received final shape. Every member expressed his opinion freely on the draft that was, at the Committee's invitation, prepared by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. I was sorry to find myself alone in thinking that whatever support was to be given to the British should be given unconditionally. This could only be done on a purely non-violent basis. But the Committee had a tremendous responsibility to discharge. It could not take the purely non-violent attitude. It felt that the nation had not imbibed the non-violent spirit requisite for the possession of the strength which disdains to take advantage of the difficulty of the opponent. But in stating the reasons for its conclusion the Committee desired to show the greatest consideration for the English.

The author of the statement is an artist. Though he cannot be surpassed in his implacable opposition to Imperialism in any shape or form, he is a friend of the English people. Indeed he is more English than Indian in his thoughts and make-up. He is often more at home with Englishmen than with his own countrymen. And he is a humanitarian in the sense that he reacts to every wrong, no matter where perpetrated. Though, therefore, he is an ardent nationalist his nationalism is enriched by his fine internationalism. Hence the statement is a manifesto addressed not only to his own countrymen, not only to the British Government and the British people, but it is addressed also to the nations of the world including those that are exploited like India. He has compelled India, through the Working Committee, to think not merely of her own freedom, but of the freedom of all the exploited nations of the world.

The same time that the Committee passed the statement it appointed a Board of his choice with himself as Chairman to deal with the situation as it may develop from time to time.

I hope that the statement will receive the unanimous

support of all the parties among Congressmen. The strongest among them will not find any lack of strength in it. And at this supreme hour in the history of the nation the Congress should believe that there will be no lack of strength in action, if action becomes necessary. It will be a pity if Congressmen engage in petty squabbles and party strife. If anything big or worthy is to come out of the committee's action, the undivided and unquestioned loyalty of every Congressman is absolutely necessary. I hope too, that all other political parties and all communities will join the Committee's demand for a clear declaration of their policy from the British Government with such corresponding action as is possible amidst martial conditions. Recognition of India, and for that matter of all those who are under the British Crown, as free and independent nations seems to me to be the natural corollary of British professions about democracy. If the war means anything less, the co-operation of dependent nations can never be honestly voluntary, unless it were based on non-violence.

All that is required is a mental revolution on the part of British statesmen. To put it still more plainly, all that is required is honest action to implement the declaration of faith in democracy made on the eve of the war, and still being repeated from British platforms. Will Great Britain have an unwilling India dragged into the war or a willing ally co-operating with her in the prosecution of a defence of true democracy? The Congress support will mean the greatest moral asset in favour of England and France. For the Congress has no soldiers to offer. The Congress fights not with violent but with non-violent means, however imperfect, however crude the non-violence may be.

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## WAR SUB-COMMITTEE CIRCULAR TO P. C. C'S

*September 16, 1939*

Dear comrades,

For many years past all of us have lived on the verge of a world crisis and preoccupied as we were with our vital

national problems, the Congress has often given thought to the approaching crisis and laid down our broad policy in regard to it. Now that crisis has come and war rages in Europe, in addition to the Far-Eastern war, which has now been going on for two and a half years. Every Congressman has been deeply moved by this turn of events and has given earnest consideration to our duty at this juncture. Not only the directions of the Congress during these past years but also the very basis of the Congress and its reason for existence compel us to play a worthy and effective part in the development of events. We have not been onlookers of the events in India passively adapting ourselves to what has happened. The Congress has essentially been a body of action and struggle in the cause of India's freedom and has shaped India's destiny for many years. That grave responsibility has to be shouldered afresh by the Congress in this crisis, which affects India as well as the rest of the world. As you are aware the Working Committee have given the most earnest consideration to these developments and have issued a statement in which they have clearly laid down India's attitude. We invite your attention to this statement so that your provincial and local committees and all Congressmen should appreciate the position fully and act in accordance with the advice given. That statement is a dispassionately worded document, clarifying the issues as they affect India in simple language and indicating the road that India has to travel in these troubled times. The implications of that statement and the possible developments must be clear to you.

The Committee have viewed the crisis in the widest perspective and considered the cause of Indian freedom in relation to world freedom. We, who claim to labour for great ends in India cannot lose sight of these perspectives. This crisis will not pass, as the Working Committee say, leaving the essential structure of the present-day world intact. The world is going to be refashioned and India is going to play her part in this refashioning. Many questions arise as to our day-to-day activities, more especially during this period when our final decision has not been taken. We shall endeavour to answer them as they are put to us. As you are aware, a special sub-committee consisting of us three has been appointed to deal with the war emergency and we shall

always be at your disposal for reference or advice. Our sub-committee will, of course, be guided by Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress President, Shri Rajendra Prasad.

Two matters, however, have to be borne in mind, for they are of essential importance. Whatever the developments might be, we can only face them with dignity and strength, if our organisation is well prepared and has put an end to internal controversy and conflict. No lover of the Congress and of Indian freedom may do anything which impairs our unity and joint will for action. We have all to rise above our petty selves and become in this crisis of our destiny, true soldiers of India, speaking and acting together, with dignity and forbearance and in accordance with the ideals and principles we have cherished. Our first duty is to tune up our organisation and keep it in a fit condition for whatever demands might be made upon it. Secondly, we must not individually or severally act or speak hastily, precipitating a development before its proper time. We must function in accordance with the spirit of the Working Committee's statement and not over-reach it or belie it in our words or deeds. That would be a disservice to the larger cause we seek to serve, as well as to this unity, which is essential in our ranks.

Your provincial and local committees should give the widest publicity to the Working Committee's statement, and explain its implications more particularly the essential need for the tightening up of our organisation and preparing it for all difficulties and trials we may have to face. Unity and discipline have to be emphasised as well as that the final decision has not been taken yet and this will depend on circumstances and developments. Our position has been frankly and clearly stated before India and the world; to that we shall adhere and seek, above all, to follow the paths which lead to world freedom and reorganisation, which must be based on our freedom. But any action taken by an individual Congressman, which goes beyond the Working Committee's statement, will not only lead to a loosening of our discipline but to a weakening of our cause and to controversy when we have to present a united front. This has to be avoided. Strength will not come to us by individual action or by brave speeches but by disciplined and united



effort. The hour of trial has come again upon us. Let us be worthy of it.

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU  
ABULKALAM AZAD  
VALLABHBHAI PATEL

## 9

## LORD ZETLAND'S STATEMENT IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

*September 26, 1939*

In the house of Lords, asked by private notice by Lord Snell to make a statement on India Lord Zetland said he gladly responded to the invitation and did so with all the more readiness in that it provides me with an opportunity for giving expression to the high appreciation of His Majesty's Government of the support, which has been accorded to them by all classes in India. From the Princes have come the most generous offers of men, money and personal service. From individuals in all parts of the country there have poured in messages of sympathy and support.

His Majesty's Government have noted with special gratification the statements made by the Prime Ministers of the Punjab and Bengal pledging their aid unconditionally in the struggle upon which we have entered, and they have also observed with very real appreciation the support which the Governors have received from Ministries in all the Indian Provinces in putting into operation such measures as had been necessary to meet the abnormal circumstances resulting from the outbreak of war.

Resort to force following upon a succession of breaches of faith by the German Government, unparalleled surely in the history of mankind, which compelled us to take up arms, has been unequivocally condemned by all political parties in India, whose leaders have expressed their unqualified sympathy with the victims of aggression. It is indeed abundantly clear that the triumph of the principles for which

the Nazi Government stands would be regarded as a calamity of the utmost magnitude by all sections of Indian people.

I am bound to add, however, that in the course of a statement recently issued, those who have been authorised to speak for the Indian National Congress have indicated that they would find it difficult to co-operate with Great Britain in the prosecution of the war except upon conditions affecting the political relations between the two countries. These conditions have so far been expressed in abstract terms and I am not at present prepared to comment upon them.

I can, however, assure you that the Viceroy is in close personal contact with leaders of Indian opinion, including representatives of the Congress and All-India Muslim League, who likewise, within the last few days, defined their general attitude towards war, and that he hopes to discuss with them various issues arising out of the situation.

I should like to add that a tribute is due to the Viceroy himself and his colleagues in the Government for the efficiency with which their preparations for meeting the emergency have been made and for the smoothness with which such preparations have been carried into effect.

*September 27, 1939*

Replying to the debate, Lord Zetland quoted Lord Snell's remarks that it was natural, though rather ill-timed, that the leaders of the Congress "should take this opportunity of reasserting their aims towards a fuller form of self-government than they at present possess."

I quite appreciate the fact that it is natural. I know many of the leaders of the Congress movement; they are men who are animated by burning patriotism and they do, I think, sometimes lose sight, while lifting their eyes to stars of the practical difficulties which stand in the way on the ground at their feet. But while I am ready to admit that it may be natural that they should take this occasion to re-emphasise their claims, I cannot help expressing the feeling that it is somewhat unfortunate that they should have chosen this time to reassert their claims. I say that for more

reasons than one. I think the British people are very susceptible to a treatment which they regard as honourable and appropriate to a particular occasion. I think that they (the British) will be very much more willing, when the time comes, to listen to the claims made to them than if they are animated by a spirit of resentment at the choosing of such an occasion for taking action which may be calculated to be embarrassing to them in a life and death struggle.

I am sorry for a further reason. I agree with Lord Snell when he pointed out that it was a tremendous advantage to India that there are now a tremendous number of ardent Indian nationalists who have had the advantage of experience in the actual work of administration.

It will be a calamity if such men, at this time, were to withdraw from Government in the provinces. They have shown that they are capable of dealing with problems which face them in their country and they have co-operated in an admirable spirit with the Governors with whom they have been associated. I have nothing but praise for the manner in which up to now they have co-operated in carrying through measures which have been necessitated by the outbreak of the war. So I say I think that the time has been ill-chosen by the leaders of the Congress for a reiteration of their claims.

I am not for the moment, in a position to give any further information in regard to the discussions taking place between the Governor-General and the Indian leaders. The Governor-General had a long talk yesterday with Mahatma Gandhi and he is proposing to see—indeed, he may actually be engaged in discussion at this moment with—the leader of the All-India Muslim League. It is his intention to discuss matters with other leaders in the course of the next few days and we can only hope that as a result of frank and free exchange of views between the Governor-General and the leaders of political parties in India, we may find that they will co-operate with us in the task and aim of which they entirely approve. There is not the smallest doubt that from one end of India to the other, there is growing an appreciation of the necessity of uprooting and destroying, once for all, the form of Government which has been responsible for bringing upon mankind this great calamity.

## OPEN A NEW CHAPTER

By M. K. GANDHI

*September 28, 1939*

An advance copy of Reuter's summary of the Lords' debate on Indian affairs has been shown to me. Perhaps silence on my part at this juncture would be a distinct disservice both to India and England. I was unprepared for the old familiar flavour in the debate in the shape of drawing comparisons unflattering to the Congress. I maintain that the Congress is an all-inclusive body. Without offence to anybody it can be said of it that it is the one body that has represented for over half a century, without a rival, the vast masses of India irrespective of class or creed. It has not a single interest opposed to that of the Musalmans or that of the people of the States. Recent years have shown unmistakably that the Congress represents beyond doubt the interests of the people of the States. It is that organization which has asked for a clear definition of the British intentions. If the British are fighting for the freedom of all, then their representatives have to state in the clearest possible terms that the freedom of India is necessarily included in the war aim. The content of such freedom can only be decided by Indians and them alone. Surely it is wrong for lord Zetland to complain as he does, though in gentle terms, that the Congress should at this juncture, when Britain is engaged in a life and death struggle, ask for a clear declaration of British intentions. I suggest that the Congress has done nothing strange or less than honourable in asking for such a declaration. Only a free India's help is of value. And the Congress has every right to know that it can go to the people and tell them that at the end of the war India's status as an independent country is as much assured as that of Great Britain. As a friend of the British I, therefore, appeal to English statesmen that they will forget the old language of imperialists and open a new chapter for all those who have been held under imperial bondage.

Segaon, 28-9-39.

Allahabad, September 29, 1939

*Pandit Jawaharlal Nebru issued the following statement:*

I have read the report of Lord Zetland's statement in the House of Lords with deep regret. I do not wish to enter into any controversy with him on this subject. The Congress Working Committee had explained the position of the Congress at length and with clarity and dignity. Lord Zetland has not followed the Working Committee's example in this respect. We had tried to consider the problem of India in the larger context of War aims and peace aims and had requested British Government to declare clearly what their aims in this War were and further give effect to such aims, in so far as it was possible in the present.

It was made perfectly clear by the Working Committee as well as by Congress leaders that we were not out to bargain or to take advantage of England's difficulty. But it was essential in our opinion, both from the point of view of India and the world, that these War aims should be clarified and people made to believe in their reality and their bonafides. It is astonishing that a request of this kind should be called inopportune and ill-timed.

The question is not of India only, but of all the world and all those who have faith in the future of humanity and who are determined to rid the world of all causes of War and human exploitation.

Therefore, the Working Committee requested the British Government not only on behalf of India, but on behalf of vast numbers of people in the world, to clarify this position and thus to bring some measure of hope in the despairing hearts of humanity. Being concerned especially and inevitably with India and the Indian people, we wanted to know how these War aims applied to India in the future and in the present.

We want to know at the same time how they apply to countries of Europe, to China, and to the various colonies. We have condemned Fascism and all its works with all our might.

Lord Zetland says that it will be a calamity, if Congress

Governments withdrew from the administration of various Provinces in India.

I agree, but it would be an infinite calamity for us and for others, if these Congress Governments forgot all ideals that we have proclaimed and lost public support on which they based themselves.

It would be also an infinite calamity, if the War went on with no clarification of issues and resulted not only in terrible destruction and horror, but also in perpetuation of every system which was denounced in the name of freedom and democracy. Whatever may be said about the statement of the Working Committee, no one can accuse them of vagueness. They have framed clear questions which demand answer.

In this grave hour of trial for all the world, when the whole fabric of civilisation is threatened, no responsible person, whether he is an Indian or an Englishman or any one else, can ignore or set aside those vital questions. No one should talk in terms of petty bargaining when issues at stake are so mighty and overwhelming.

No one also can consider these issues in terms of twenty years ago, because the world has changed and India has changed and for any one to forget this overwhelming fact is to exhibit his total want of understanding of things as they are. That way lies peril not only for India and for England, but for the world at large.

Though the world has changed and is likely to change in the immediate future at a terrific pace, Lord Zetland still speaks in terms of yesterdays that are dead and gone. He might have delivered his speech twenty years ago.

It is too late, it is indeed impossible for any of us, whether we are in England or India, to stop the rushing torrent of change. If we are wise, we can control it to some extent, possibly divert it, into right directions.

I want to repeat with all the emphasis that I possess that we have not put forward any demand in the spirit of the market-place. It is our duty as responsible Indians to consider the freedom and prosperity of India. That is the essential function of the Congress and it can never forget that.

But we have endeavoured to view this, specially in these

dynamic times, from a larger point of view, because we are convinced that no problem can be solved to-day without reference to world problems.

If it was necessary for the sake of world freedom and prosperity, I am sure, India would even forego some National advantage, for we realise that national advantage brought at that cost will not be worth having for long.

But we must be convinced of that world freedom and we must see India in the picture of world freedom. Then only will War have meaning for us and move our minds and hearts, for then we shall be struggling and suffering for a cause that is worthwhile not only for us, but for all the peoples of the world. Because we feel that large numbers of British people have the same world ideals as many of us possess in India that we have offered them our co-operation in the realization of these ideals. But if these ideals are not there, what do we fight for?

Only a free and consenting India can throw her weight for ideals that are openly proclaimed and acted upon.

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*October 4, 1939*

In a message to the British people through the *Manchester Guardian*, Mahatma Gandhi said:

"It will be a very serious tragedy in this tragic war if Britain is found to fail in the very first test of sincerity of her professions about democracy. Do the declarations, or do they not, include the full freedom of India according to the wishes of her people? This is a very simple and elementary question asked by the Congress. The Congress has the right to ask that question. I hope that the answer will be as it is expected by the Congress and, let me say, all those who wish well by Great Britain."

October 7, 1939

Pandit Jawaharlal's message to the *News Chronicle*.

If this war is for democracy and self-determination and against Nazi aggression, it cannot be fought for territorial annexations, indemnities of reparations, for keeping colonial peoples in subjection and for maintaining the Imperialist system. India can take no part in defending Imperialism, but she will join in a struggle for freedom. India's resources are vast but even of greater value is her goodwill and her moral support for a worthy cause. This is no small offer that India makes for it means the ending of 100 years of hostility between India and England. Only a free and equal India can co-operate of her free will in this task. Till that vital change is made none of us have the power to make the people of India enthusiastic for a war which is not theirs.

This historic opportunity must be seized by recognising India as a free nation with the right to draw up her constitution and her charter of independence. Anything short of that will mean losing this opportunity and keeping alive the spirit of friction and hostility between India and England. The first step must therefore be a declaration of India's full freedom. This has to be followed by its application now, in so far as is possible, in order to give the people effective control of the governance of India and the prosecution of war on India's behalf. Then only is it possible to create the psychological conditions which can lead to popular support. India wants to forget the past of conflict and wants to stretch out her hand in comradeship. She must be convinced that that past is over and we are all striving for a new order not only in Europe but also in Asia and the world.



## WAR CRISIS

*The All India Congress Committee which met at Wardha on October 9 and 10, 1939, passed the following resolution on the war crisis.*

The declaration of war in Europe has created an international situation of the gravest import to the world and to India, and the All India Congress Committee charged with the heavy responsibility of guiding the people of India in this moment of world crisis, has sought guidance from the principles and declarations of the Congress in considering this grave situation. The Congress has been guided throughout by its objective of achieving the independence of the Indian people and the establishment of a free democratic state in India wherein the rights and interests of all minorities are preserved and safeguarded. The means it has adopted in its struggles and activities have been peaceful and legitimate, and it has looked upon war and violence with horror and as opposed to progress and civilisation. In particular, the Congress has declared itself opposed to all imperialist wars and to the domination of one country over another.

In spite of the repeated declarations of the Congress in regard to war, the British Government have declared India a belligerent country without the consent of the Indian people, and various far-reaching measures have been hurried through the legislatures and promulgated in the form of ordinances, vitally affecting them and circumscribing and limiting the powers of the Provincial Governments.

The All India Congress Committee, however, does not wish to take any decision precipitately and without giving every opportunity for the war and peace aims of the British Government to be clarified, with particular reference to India. The Committee approves of and endorses the statement issued by the Working Committee on September 14, 1939 on the war crisis, and repeats the invitation contained therein to the British Government to state their war aims and peace aims.

While the Committee condemns Fascism and Nazi aggression, it is convinced that peace and freedom can only be established and preserved by an extension of democracy

to all colonial countries and by the application of the principle of self-determination to them so as to eliminate imperialist control. In particular, India must be declared an independent nation and at present application should be given to this status to the largest possible extent. The A. I. C. C. earnestly trusts that this declaration will be made by the British Government in any statement that it may make in regard to its war and peace aims.

The Committee desire to declare afresh that Indian freedom must be based on democracy and unity and the full recognition and protection of the rights of all minorities to which the Congress has always pledged itself.

The Committee approves of the formation by the Working Committee of the War Emergency Sub-Committee and authorises the Working Committee to take such steps as may be necessary to give effect to this resolution and to their statement on the war crisis.

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### ALL INDIA STATES' PEOPLES' CONFERENCE

#### STANDING COMMITTEE'S STATEMENT

*October 11, 1939*

The Standing Committee of the States' Peoples' Conference have met at a time of grave crisis in the world, when war rages in Europe and the people of India have to take vital decisions of the gravest import to their future. This future will necessarily comprise the states, and even in the present the crisis is having its direct repercussions in the Indian States. The Committee desire to associate themselves fully with the statement issued by the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress on September 14, 1939, and with the resolution of the All India Congress Committee on the War Crisis passed on October 10, 1939. Believing, as they do, in the unity of India and a common freedom for all the Indian people, they record their deep satisfaction that the Congress has, at this critical juncture, given powerful

voice to the demand of the Indian people for democratic freedom. In this freedom to come the people of the States must be equal sharers and they must be prepared to shoulder equal responsibilities.

The immediate cause of this war in Europe was Nazi aggression and the Western allies have proclaimed that they are fighting in the cause of democracy, freedom and self-determination. With these objectives the Standing Committee is in full agreement but it is incumbent that these objectives should be clarified and applied to countries outside Europe and especially to India. The Standing Committee therefore associate themselves with the request made by the National Congress to the British Government for a full and unequivocal statement of Britain's war and peace aims. These aims should be applicable to the people of the Indian States also, who live under an autocratic system which is more reactionary than even the Nazi regime against which Britain is fighting. As the Congress Working Committee has stated, "the British Government in India is more responsible for this autocracy than even the Rulers themselves, as has been made painfully evident during the past year." To support this system in India is the very negation of democracy and all that Great Britain is said to stand for in the war.

Many of the Rulers of Indian States have offered their services and resources to Great Britain for the prosecution of the war and have expressed their support of the cause of democracy in Europe. It is incongruous in the extreme that such professions should be made while undiluted autocracy prevails in the States. The rulers have not in any way sought to consult their people before offering the resources of their States or committing themselves to the war. The Standing Committee, speaking on behalf of the people of the Indian States, cannot accept this commitment, or agree to this continuation of autocracy in the States because war has broken out in Europe.

The Committee notes that the war has already been used for the purpose of introducing new and stringent repressive measures and putting an end to civil liberty in many of the States. In some states, promised reforms in the administration have been deliberately postponed because of

the war. A war, ostensibly for democracy, is thus resulting in greater autocracy and repression in the States and in stopping all advance. The people of the States express their strongest protest against this and are wholly unable to give their support to the war under these conditions. They may have to resist impositions forced down upon them.

In the opinion of the Standing Committee the question of introducing democratic institutions in the States is of urgent and vital importance, so that the people of the States might take their proper place in the shaping of a free and independent India and in the new world order to come. The committee therefore invite the various Rulers to declare that they accept the objective of full responsible government in their States and undertake to give effect to it, in the largest possible measure, in the immediate future. The new repressive legislation should be suspended and civil liberty allowed. India may be legally at war but there are no war conditions anywhere near India and certainly not in the States, which can justify the application of extreme measures of repression.

The Standing Committee desire to make it clear that the Rulers can expect no co-operation from the people unless these fundamental changes are made and the governance of the States is carried on with popular consent and through popular representatives.

The Committee send their greetings to the peoples of many States who are carrying on, with courage and fortitude, their struggle for democratic freedom and civil liberty. This struggle must inevitably become a part of the larger struggle for Indian freedom and for that the people should prepare.

## 16

### GANDHIJI'S COMMENT ON THE A. I. C. C. RESOLUTION

*October 13, 1939*

I regard the recent resolution of the A. I. C. C. on the situation as moderate and wise. It was bound to reiterate the

Congress demand for an unequivocal declaration. Its merit lies in not fixing any time limit for the declaration. It is noteworthy that the resolution was carried by a majority of three to one. It is to be hoped that the British Government will appreciate the friendly spirit in which the Congress is approaching the situation. It is to be hoped also that the Europeans of India will range themselves alongside of the Congress. But the greatest help can only come from Congressmen themselves. If they do not act on the square, no external sympathy and even help will be of any avail. I see that impatience has seized some Congressmen who want to be doing something to signify their opposition to a war which they believe to be for defending Imperialism. I suggest to them that they will be defeating the common purpose by acting in opposition to the Congress decision expressed in the only way open to a democratic organization. They had their say at the A. I. C. C. meeting. They are in honour bound to defer direct action till the Working Committee or the A. I. C. C. decides otherwise. No reliance can be placed upon an organization which is not able to exercise effective control over its members. Imagine an army whose soldiers, under the false belief that they are advancing the common cause, adopt measures in defiance of those taken by the headquarters. Such action may well spell defeat. Therefore I beseech Congressmen at this critical juncture to desist from any action that would savour of indiscipline or defiance. They should surely see that by such action they undermine Congress prestige and weaken its influence.

Segaon, 13-10-39.

## 17

### THE FICTION OF MAJORITY

By M. K. GANDHI

*Harijan, October 16, 1939*

It is painful to find the British Press and Britishers advancing the minority claim to prevent the declaration suggested by the Congress, if I may say so, in the common in-

terest. If the force of the Congress suggestion has not been overwhelmingly felt, the declaration will not come. There need be no dejection among Congressmen if it does not. We shall get our independence when it is deserved. But it would be well for the British Government and the Allied cause, if the minority argument were not flung in the face of a credulous world. It would be honest to say that the British desire to hold India yet awhile. There will be nothing wrong in such a desire. India is a conquest. Conquests are not surrendered except when the conquered successfully rebel, or under an awakened conscience the conqueror repents of the conquest, or when the conquered territory ceases to be a profitable concern. I had hoped and still hope that the British, having become war-weary and sickened over the mad slaughter involved in the present war, would want to close it at the earliest possible moment by being above board in every respect and therefore in respect of India. This they can never be, so long as they hold India in bondage.

I know that many have been angry with me for claiming an exclusive right for the Congress to speak for the people of India as a whole. It is not an arrogant pretension. It is explicit in the first article of the Congress. It wants and works for independence for the whole of India. It speaks neither for majority nor minority. It seeks to represent all Indians without any distinction. Therefore those who oppose it should not count, if the claim for independence is admitted. Those who support the claim simply give added strength to the Congress claim.

Britain has hitherto held India by producing before the world Indians who want Britain to remain in India as ruler and arbiter between rival claimants. These will always exist. The question is whether it is right for Britain to plead these rivalries in defence of holding India under subjection, or whether she should now recognize the mistake and leave India to decide upon the method of her own government.

And who are the minorities? They are religious, political and social: thus Mussalmans (religious); Depressed Classes (social); Liberals (political); Princes (social); Brahmins (social); Non-Brahmins (social); Lingayats (social); Sikhs (social?); Christians—Protestants and Catholics (religious); Jains (social?); Zamindars (political?). I have

a letter from the Secretary of the All India Shiah Conference registering their claim for separate existence. Who are the majority in this medley? Unfortunately for unhappy India even Muslims are somewhat divided and so are the Christians. It is the policy of the British Government to recognize every group that becomes sufficiently vocal and troublesome. I have drawn no fanciful picture of the minorities. It is true to life. The Congress itself has been obliged to deal with every one of the groups I have mentioned. My list is not exhaustive. It is illustrative. It can be increased *ad libitum*.

I know that the fashion is to talk of the Hindus forming the majority community. But Hinduism is an elastic indefinable term, and Hindus are not a homogeneous whole like Muslims and Christians. And when one analyses the majority in any provincial legislature it will be found to consist of a combination of the so-called minorities. In other words and in reality so far as India is concerned, there can only be political parties and no majority or minority communities. The cry of the tyranny of the majority is a fictitious cry.

I observe that Janab Jinnah Saheb has said, in reply to Rajenbabu's letter offering to refer the League's grievances against the Congress Governments to an arbitration tribunal, that he has "already placed the whole case before the Viceroy and the Governor-General and requested him to take up the matter without delay as he and the Governors of the Provinces have been expressly authorized under the Constitution and are entrusted with the responsibility to protect the rights and the interests of the minorities.

"The matter is now under His Excellency's consideration, and he is the proper authority to take such action and adopt such measures as would meet our requirements and would restore complete sense of security and satisfaction amongst the Musalmans in those Provinces where the Congress Ministries are in charge of the administration."

It is unfortunate that he has rejected Rajenbabu's reasonable proposal. Is it rejection of the proffered hand of friendship? Be that as it may, nobody can have anything to say against the Viceroy investigating and adjudicating upon the charges brought against Congress ministries. Let us hope he will soon conduct the investigation. Whether the Muslims

are regarded as minorities or otherwise, their as well as any other community's rights and privileges, religious, social, cultural and political, must be regarded as a sacred trust to be jealously guarded. And the independence of India will make no difference to the protection of those rights. In fact they will be better protected in every way, if only because in the framing of the Charter of Independence by the nation's representatives the Muslims and other minorities, real or so-called, will have an effective voice.

Consider for one moment what can happen if the English were to withdraw all of a sudden and there was no foreign usurper to rule. It may be said that the Punjabis, be they Muslims, Sikhs or others, will overrun India. It is highly likely that the Gurkhas will throw in their lot with the Punjabis. Assume further that non-Punjabi Muslims will make common cause with the Punjabis. Where will the Congressmen composed chiefly of Hindus be? If they are still truly non-violent, they will be left unmolested by the warriors. Congressmen won't want to divide power with the warriors but will refuse to let them exploit their unarmed countrymen. Thus if anybody has cause to keep the British rule for protection from the stronger element, it is the Congressmen and those Hindus and others who are represented by the Congress. The question, therefore, resolves itself into not who is numerically superior but who is stronger. Surely there is only one answer. Those who raise the cry of minority in danger have nothing to fear from the so-called majority which is merely a paper majority and which in any event is ineffective because it is weak in the military sense. Paradoxical as it may appear, it is literally true that the so-called minorities' fear has some bottom only so long as the weak majority has the backing of the British bayonets to enable it to play at democracy. But the British power will, so long as it so chooses, successfully play one against the other calling the parties by whatever names it pleases. And this process need not be dishonest. They may honestly believe that so long as there are rival claims put up, they must remain in India in response to a call from God to hold the balance evenly between them. Only that way lies not Democracy but Fascism, Nazism, Bolshevism and Imperialism, all facets of the doc-



trine of 'Might is Right'. I would fain hope that this war will change values. It can only do so, if India is recognized as independent and if that India represents unadulterated non-violence in the political field.

Seгаon, 16-10-39.

18

## DECLARATION OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE VICEROY

*October 17, 1939*

The following is the text of the Viceroy's statement:

Since the outbreak of the war and, more particularly, during the last four weeks I have been in the closest touch with the leaders of political opinion in British India and with representatives of the Princely order; and I have spared no effort to acquaint myself by personal discussion with the trend of feeling; to ascertain the views of the different sections of public opinion in this country on the great questions of the day, and in particular on this question of the basis on which and the extent to which India could best co-operate in the prosecution of the war; and to satisfy myself as to the extent to which a basis of common agreement exists, and as to the manner in which the position, so far as it may still remain obscure, can best be clarified. Matters have now reached a point at which, in my judgment, it would be well that I should make a statement designed, in the light of the discussions which I have had during these past few weeks, to clear the position on the main questions which emerge at the present moment.

I would make a preliminary observation. I have had the advantage of a full and frank discussion with no fewer than 52 people—with Mr. Gandhi, with the President and members of the Congress Working Committee, with Mr. Jinnah and with representative members of the Muslim League organisation, with the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, and with a great variety of persons prominent in the political life of British India.

As was only to be expected, conversations with representatives of so many different points of view revealed marked differences of outlook, markedly different demands, and markedly different solutions for the problems that lie before us. Again, and that too was what might have been expected at a time such as the present, reservations or demands for special protection on one side have tended to be balanced by proposals for still more marked constitutional changes on another. I would ask that these differences of view, deeply and sincerely held, I have not the least doubt, by those who have advanced them to me, should be borne in mind when we consider our present problems, for they have a very direct and obvious relevance to them.

I trust most earnestly that I shall be able to dispel certain misapprehensions which are, I am clear, widely and genuinely held, and that, even if to a degree more limited than has been urged upon me from many quarters, I may be able to clarify the position as regards our hopes and our objectives for India, and to make some little contribution to the removal of the obstacles which existing doubts on that point have caused to that full, generous, and ready co-operation which it is, I am certain, her anxiety and that of her peoples to give to-day to a good cause.

The essential matters on which a clarification of the position is beyond any question desired are:—

First, what are the objectives of His Majesty's Government in the war? To what extent are they of such a character that India with her long history and great traditions can, with a clear conscience, associate herself with them?

Second, what is the future that is contemplated in the constitutional sphere for the Indian continent? What are the intentions of His Majesty's Government? Is it possible to define those intentions more precisely and in such a manner as to leave the world in no doubt as to the ultimate status envisaged for India as far as the British Commonwealth is concerned?

Third, in what way can the desire of India and of Indian public opinion for a closer association, and an effective association, with the prosecution of the war be satisfied?

Let me deal with these questions in the order in which

I have stated them. Let me in the first place consider to what extent in existing conditions and at this stage in the development of the campaign in which we are engaged any positive and satisfactory answer admits of being given to the demand for a more precise definition of our objectives. In endeavouring to answer that question I do not propose to touch on the question of our objectives for India. That is a matter which I will deal with separately in answering the second question which I have mentioned above. His Majesty's Government have not themselves yet defined with any ultimate precision their detailed objectives in the prosecution of the war. It is obvious that such a definition can come only at a later stage in the campaign, and that when it does come, it cannot be a statement of the aims of any single ally. There may be many changes in the world position and in the situation that confronts us before the war comes to an end, and much must depend on the circumstances in which it does come to an end, and on the intervening course of the campaign.

The experience of all history shows in these circumstances the unwisdom and the impracticability of precise definition at so early a stage as that which we have now reached. But the fact that, for the reasons I have given, precise definition is not practicable does not mean, as I see it, that there is any real doubt, or any uncertainty, in the minds of the public, whether in India or in the United Kingdom or in any allied country, as to the motives which have actuated us in entering into the war, and consequently the broad general objectives which we have before us in the campaign which is now being waged. We are fighting to resist aggression whether directed against ourselves or others. Our general aims have been stated by the Prime Minister within the last few days as follows:—"We are seeking no material advantage for ourselves. We are not aiming only at victory, but looking beyond it to laying the foundation of a better international system which will mean that war is not to be the inevitable lot of each succeeding generation. We, like all the peoples of Europe, long for peace, but it must be a real and settled peace, not an uneasy truce interrupted by constant, alarms and threats." This statement, I think, clearly establishes the nature of the cause for which we are fighting,

and justifies, if justification is needed, the extension by India of her moral support and her goodwill to the prosecution of that cause.

Let me turn now to the second question which has been put to me—the question of India's future and of the lines of her constitutional development. That is a question, I am certain in the light of my conversations, which is of the greatest and most acute interest to all parties and all sections of opinion in this country. As matters stand to-day, the constitutional position of India and the policy of His Majesty's Government are governed by the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935. Part III of that Act, which provides for the conferment of Provincial Autonomy on the Provinces of British India, has been implemented. For nearly two and a half years now the Provinces have been conducting their own affairs under the scheme of the Act. That they have done so, on the whole, with great success, even if now and then difficulties have arisen, no one can question. Whatever the political party in power in those Provinces, all can look with satisfaction on a distinguished record of public achievement during the last two and a half years. The experience that they have had has shown beyond any question that whatever minor problems the application of the scheme of the Act may have presented, whatever difficulties may have confronted us in the operation of the Act from time to time in the Provincial sphere, the scheme of the Act is essentially sound, and that it transfers great power and great opportunities to popularly elected Governments dependent on the support of a majority in their legislatures.

The second stage contemplated by the Act was the reconstitution of the Central Government on such a basis as to achieve the essential goal of Indian unity. The method contemplated for that purpose was the achievement of a Federation of All-India, in which the representatives of all political parties in British India would, together with the Rulers of the Indian States, form a unified Government of India as a whole. I am only too conscious of the severity of the criticisms that have been advanced from many different points of view against the Federal scheme and against the arrangements embodied in Part II of the Act. I will say to-

day no more than that, having myself had so close a familiarity not only with the framing of the provisions, but with the preliminary work which has been done with a view to putting them into force, I have throughout believed that the Federal scheme in its operation would have turned out as satisfactorily as, broadly speaking, we can all of us regard the scheme of Provincial Autonomy as having turned out. I will not dilate on that subject to-day, for our work in connection with the Federal Scheme has been suspended. But in reaffirming, as I do, my belief in the essential soundness of the Federal aspects of the Act of 1935, I do so with the greater emphasis because of the evidence which the Federal provisions of the Act constitute, of the anxiety of His Majesty's Government to achieve, with the minimum of delay, and on the basis which appears to represent the greatest amount of agreement between the various parties and interests affected by the unity of India, and to advance beyond a further and a most important milestone on the road to India's goal.

Such being the background against which we are working, what are the intentions and aims of His Majesty's Government in relation to India? I cannot do better in reply to that question than to refer to the statement made on behalf of His Majesty's Government, and with their full authority, by the late Secretary of State for India in the House of Commons on February 6, 1935. That statement makes the position clear beyond a shadow of doubt. It refers to the pledge given in the Preamble of the Act of 1919, and it makes it clear that it was no part of the plan of His Majesty's Government to repeal that pledge. It confirms equally the interpretation placed in 1929 by Lord Irwin as Viceroy, again on the authority of the Government of the day, on that Preamble, that "the natural issue of India's progress as there contemplated is the attainment of Dominion Status." I need not dilate on the words of that statement. They are clear and positive. They are enshrined in the Parliamentary record. They stand as a definite and categorical exposition of the policy of His Majesty's Government to-day, and of their intentions to-day in this end—the future constitutional development and position of India. I would add only that the Instrument of Instructions issued to me as Governor-General by His Majesty the King-Em-

peror in May 1937 lays upon me as Governor-General a direction so to exercise the trust which His Majesty has reposed in me "that the partnership between India and the United Kingdom within our Empire may be furthered to the end that India may attain its due place among our Dominions."

That is the policy and that is the position. Those are the intentions of His Majesty's Government. Let me go on to say another word about the Act of 1935. That Act was based on the greatest measure of common agreement which it was possible to obtain at the time when it was framed. It was based as is well known to all of us, on the common labours of British and Indian statesmen, and of representatives of British India as well as of the Indian States over a long period of years. All parties were at one stage or other closely associated with those deliberations, and I can speak from personal experience when I bear tribute to the extreme anxiety of all those of us on whom, in the Joint Select Committee, there fell the more particular responsibility for devising proposals for the consideration of Parliament, to ensure that the fullest account had been taken of all interests, of the views of all political parties, and that nothing had been left undone to ensure that the outcome of our labours reflected the greatest measure of agreement practicable in the conditions that confronted us.

Be that as it may, His Majesty's Government recognise that when the time comes to resume consideration of the plan for the future Federal Government of India, and of the plan destined to give effect to the assurances given in Parliament by the late Secretary of State, to which I have just referred, it will be necessary to reconsider in the light of the then circumstances to what extent the details of the plan embodied in the Act of 1935 remain appropriate. And I am authorised now by His Majesty's Government to say that at the end of the war they will be very willing to enter into consultation with representatives of the several communities, parties, and interests in India, and with the Indian Princes, with a view to securing their aid and co-operation in the framing of such modifications as may seem desirable.

I have, I trust, in what I have just said, made clear that the intention and the anxiety of His Majesty's Government

is, as stated in the Instrument of Instructions to the Governor-General, to further the partnership between India and the United Kingdom within the Empire to the end that India may attain her due place among the great Dominions. The scheme of government embodied in the Act of 1935 was designed as an essential stage in that process. But I have made clear in what I have just said that His Majesty's Government will, at the end of the war, be prepared to regard the scheme of the Act as open to modification in the light of Indian views. And I would make it clear, too, that it will be their object, as at all times in the past it has been, to spare no pains to further agreement by any means in their power in the hope of contributing to the ordered and harmonious progress of India towards her goal.

Let me in that connection add that in the conversations, I have had, representatives of the minorities have urged most strongly on me the necessity of a clear assurance that full weight would be given to their views and to their interests in any modifications that may be contemplated. On that I need say no more than that over more than a decade at the three Round Table Conferences, and at the Joint Select Committee, His Majesty's Government consulted with and had the assistance or the advice of representatives of all parties and all interests in this country. It is unthinkable that we should now proceed to plan afresh or to modify in any respect any important part of India's future constitution without again taking counsel with those who have in the recent past been so closely associated in a like task with His Majesty's Government and with Parliament.

That some even more extensive scheme than I have mentioned, some even more widely phrased indication of the intentions of His Majesty's Government, is desired in certain quarters in this country, I am fully aware from the conversations I have had during these last few weeks. That that is a desire held with sincerity and that those who hold it are convinced that it is in the manner in question that the future progress and development of India and the expressed intentions of His Majesty's Government can best be fulfilled, I fully and readily accept. I would utter one word only of caution. And if I say that the situation must be faced in terms of world politics and of political realities in this coun-

try, I do so from no lack of sympathy and no lack of appreciation of the motives that weigh with the people of India and the ideals that appeal to them. But I would urge that it is essential in matters of this nature, affecting the future of tens of millions of people, affecting the relations of the great communities, affecting the Princes of India, affecting the immense commercial and industrial enterprises, whether Indian or European in this country, that the largest measure of agreement practicable should be achieved. With the best will in the world, progress must be conditioned by practical considerations. I am convinced myself, if I may say so with the utmost emphasis, that having regard to the extent of agreement which in fact exists in the constitutional field, and on this most difficult and important question of the nature of the arrangements to be made for expediting and facilitating the attainment by India of her full status, there is nothing to be gained by phrases which, widely and generally expressed, contemplate a state of things which is unlikely to stand at the present point of political development the test of practical application, or to result in that unified effort by all parties and all communities in India on the basis of which alone India can hope to go forward as one and to occupy the place to which her history and her destinies entitle her. I would ask that these words of caution be not taken as indicating any lack of sympathy on the part of His Majesty's Government for the aspirations of India, or any indifference to the pace of her advance; and I would repeat that His Majesty's Government are but concerned to use their best endeavours, now as in the past, to bring about that measure of agreement and understanding between all parties and all interests in this country which is so essential a condition of progress towards India's goal.

I turn now to the arrangements to be made to secure the association of public opinion in India with the conduct of the war. India's contribution has already been great, great to a degree which has impressed the imagination of the world. At the head of the list I would put the contribution which India had made in spiritual, and not in material, terms,—the support of her peoples for a cause which they can regard as a good and a righteous cause. In the material field equally her contribution is already most significant and may be greater



still. And in the circumstances the desire the anxiety of public opinion in India to be associated with the conduct of the war is naturally one with which I personally have throughout felt the greatest sympathy. In the circumstances I have described, the desirability of steps to ensure that, leaders of public opinion should be in the closest touch with developments is of the first importance.

I have discussed with the utmost frankness with the leaders of the various parties who have been good enough to come to see me in connection with the constitutional position by what machinery we could best give effect to this desire. We have examined a variety of expedients, and there has been no hesitation on the part of any of us in assessing the advantages and the disadvantages presented by each of them. I do not propose to-day to examine those various alternatives in particular detail. I will only say that in the light of my conversations and of the views (by no means always in accord) of representatives of the great parties and of the Princes, I am of opinion that the right solution would be the establishment of a consultative group, representative of all major political parties in British India and of the Indian Princes, over which the Governor-General would himself preside, which would be summoned at his invitation, and which would have as its object the association of public opinion in India with the conduct of the war and with questions relating to war activities.

This group, for practical reasons, would inevitably be limited in size. But His Majesty's Government contemplate that it should be fully representative and in particular that its personnel should be drawn by the Governor-General from panels prepared by the various major political parties, from which a selection of individuals to attend meetings of the group would be made by the Governor-General. I hope in the very near future to enter into consultation with political leaders and with the Princes on this question. I have no doubt whatever that an arrangement of this nature will most materially contribute to associating the Indian States and British India with the steps which are being taken for the prosecution of the war and with the arrangements that are being made in that connection.

And I am confident, too, that in an association of this

nature of representatives of all parties and all interests, there lies the germ of that fuller and broader association of all points of view in this country which contain in it the seeds of such advantage for the future of India as a whole.

When I spoke to the Central Legislature a month ago, I made an appeal for unity. I would repeat that appeal to-day. It is my earnest hope that the explanations I have given will have contributed materially to the removal of misunderstandings. Even if on certain points I have not, to my knowledge, been able to give assurances so comprehensive as those which would, I know, have been welcomed in certain political quarters in India, I would urge insistently that this is not a moment at which to risk the splitting of the unity of India on the rock of particular phrases, and I would press that we should continue to aim at the unity of India even if differences of greater or less significance continue to exist.

We live in difficult and anxious days. Great ideals are in issue. Dangers real and imminent, face our civilization. Those dangers are as imminent in the case of India as of any other member of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Those ideals are as precious to India as to any country in the Empire or in the world. At this grave moment in the destinies of nations, my prayer to all parties would be not to dissociate themselves from the common effort, but to lend their co-operation and their assistance in the prosecution of the war. There could be no more decisive proof of India's fidelity to her best traditions than the full use of the opportunities afforded to her by the war for concerted endeavour. The ideals we have set before us, the objects to secure which we are engaged in the present struggle, are such as to command widespread sympathy and widespread support in India. They are in harmony with her past history and her highest traditions. It is my hope that in the grave juncture which we face, India will go forward as a united country in support of common cause.

The following is the relevant portion of Sir Samuel Hoare's statement made in the House of Commons on February 6, 1935:

• "The position of the Government is this: They stand

firmly by the pledge contained in 1919 Preamble (which it is not part of their plan to repeal) and by the interpretation put by the Viceroy in 1929 on the authority of the Government of the day on that Preamble that 'the natural issue of India's progress as there contemplated is the attainment of Dominion Status'. The declaration of 1929 was made to remove doubts which had been felt as to the meaning of the Preamble of 1919. There is, therefore, no need to enshrine in an Act words and phrases which would add nothing new to the declaration in the Preamble. In saying that we stand by our pledges. I include, of course, not only pledges given to British India and to Burma as part of British India, but also our engagements with the Indian States.

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## LORD ZETLAND'S STATEMENT IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

*October 18, 1939*

In the course of his statement in the House of Lords, Lord Zetland said:

It will perhaps be for the convenience of your lordships if I preface what I have to say with a brief objective account of events in India immediately preceding and following the invasion of Poland by Germany. On the outbreak of the war one thing was immediately made apparent and that was that the overwhelming feeling of the Indian people from one end of the country to the other was one of violent protest against the outrage committed by the Nazi Government against decencies of civilised existence and of deep detestation of all that the international methods associated with the name of Hitler stands for and that feeling, as I pointed out in the course of a few words, which I addressed to your lordships on September 26, found expression in spontaneous support from men and women of all creeds and classes and communities.

Yet while this was so, it was a fact that the most numerous and most powerful political party in India, the Indian

National Congress, had committed itself some time earlier to a specific attitude in the event of war breaking out in which Great Britain was involved. Their attitude was further defined when early in August they took exception to certain precautionary methods taken by His Majesty's Government and the Government of India in pursuance of their obligation to secure the safety of India and as an indication of their disapproval of the action taken, they called upon the Congress members of the Central Legislative Assembly to refrain from attending the forthcoming session.

The particular measure to which exception was taken was the despatch of external defence troops from India to Egypt and Aden and Singapore. This action was taken on the urgent advice of the highest naval and military authorities. The situation, at that time, was such that the possibility of a threat to the safety of India, both from west and from east, could not be excluded and from the military point of view it was essential that the western and eastern approaches to India should be adequately defended. It would clearly have been the height of folly to have given the world by discussion in the legislature advance notice of our military dispositions.

Nevertheless, both the Viceroy and I were anxious to take leaders of political parties in India into our confidence and our plans were, therefore, communicated to the leaders of political parties in the Assembly, including, of course, the Congress party.

So much for the precautionary measures, to which exception was subsequently taken. I now come to the outbreak of war. For a long time past, the Viceroy with my full knowledge and approval has been in close touch with the most outstanding figure on the Indian political stage—Mahatma Gandhi; and here may I pause for a moment to pay a personal tribute to Mr. Gandhi, known to and beloved by peoples of India for the readiness, which he has shown not only to interpret to us the viewpoint and aspirations of the Congress, but to endeavour to appreciate in his turn our viewpoint and difficulties with which we have had to grapple and furthermore, for the help which he has most willingly given us in our endeavours to surmount them.

This being so, it was natural that immediately on the

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outbreak of war the Viceroy should have invited Mr. Gandhi to take counsel with him. The invitation was promptly accepted and within forty-eight hours of the declaration of war they were in close consultation. The outcome is known, for Mr. Gandhi has himself stated publicly that, speaking in his purely personal capacity—for he was not authorised to speak for the Congress—his view was that in the struggle upon which this country had entered, India should give us unconditional support. Thereafter, the Working Committee of the Congress met at Wardha to consider the situation and they invited to their Council Room not only members of the Working Committee but others, including Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr. Subhas Bose.

It was not, however, until September 15, that the result of their deliberations was made known in the form of a comprehensive statement. Such a document, setting forth as it did the views of the most powerful political party in India, called for the most careful consideration. Your lordships may study it for yourselves, for you will find it printed as an annex to the Viceroy's statement in the White Paper and it is sufficient for my purpose at the moment to say that, broadly speaking, the effect of it was, while condemning unequivocally the action of the German Government, to make it clear before they, as a party, decide to give us their support, they would wish to be informed of our war aims and in particular, how those aims would apply to India.

Meanwhile, the Working Committee of the next most numerous and powerful political party in India—the All-India Muslim League, whose president, Mr. Jinnah had also been in consultation with the Viceroy—met to take stock of the situation and issued a statement on September 18, from which it was apparent that while Muslims, equally with the Congress, unhesitatingly condemned aggression, of which the Nazi Government had been guilty, there was between their view and that of the Congress regarding the internal political situation a substantial divergence. Here, again, I need not enter into detail, for the text of this statement also will be found in the White Paper.

The Viceroy has been at pains to acquaint himself fully with the view of these two organisations by personal discus-

sion with their leaders. But his consultations did not stop there, for there were the Princes, who from the first have thrown their whole weight into the scale against aggression and who had been in close contact with the Viceroy through the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, and there was the National Liberal Federation of India, who, as will be seen by reference to their statement printed in the White Paper, had already made their attitude towards war plain and had offered unconditional support to Great Britain. And over and above these, there were the leaders of other communities and interests such as the Hindu Mahasabha, the Schedule Castes, Sikhs and Parsees, to mention only some of them, who instantly made it clear that their views and interests should not be left out of account in the discussions that were in progress.

There, then, you have the background of the Indian picture, what of the main features of the picture itself? They may be said to be two in number first, the desire on the part of all communities to see the overthrow of the menace, which overshadows Europe in particular and the world in general and secondly, the desire for self expression, which takes the form, in the domain of politics, of self-government on a democratic basis. But here there are qualifications, for there is on the part of minorities insistent demand for safeguards against consequences which, rightly or wrongly, it is feared, might result from unfettered domination of the majority.

And herein is to be found the root cause of our difficulties—difficulties which those who are not burdened with the responsibility which rests upon His Majesty's Government and the Government of India, may—and frequently do—discount, but which His Majesty's Government themselves cannot ignore. For those who confine their gaze to one part only of the picture, the problem of self-government for India may appear to be a comparatively simple one, but for those who, like His Majesty's Government have to view the picture as a whole, this is far from being the case. I shall have something to say on that aspect of the case before I resume my seat.

Meanwhile, let me say that it is in our view eminently desirable that consultations with the leaders of public opinion

in India, which the Viceroy has initiated since the outbreak of war—I think he has seen more than fifty leaders—should not only be maintained, but should be provided for by some more definite machinery. One means proposed for the achievement of that object are set out by the Viceroy in his statement. Briefly stated, what we have in mind is a broadly based consultative body, whose personnel would be drawn by the Viceroy from panels of individuals nominated by various political parties and interests.

From this main body the Viceroy, who would himself preside over its deliberations, would summon members to attend particular meetings at which, according to the business to be taken into consideration, their presence was desirable. Such a body would serve as a 'liaison' between the Government and the people since it would have imparted to it views and proposals of the Government and in its turn would be in a position to give free and frank expression to its opinions on all matters laid before it. These might well include matters which, in times of war, it would be inconvenient to discuss in a more public manner.

Such a scheme would possess this further advantage; that those concerned, representing different parties, communities and interests would be in close association not only with the Viceroy but also with one another and it would be my hope that the association and collaboration in so great an enterprise as the conduct of war would tend gradually to lessen the differences and emphasise the extent of the common interest of all those taking part in it and of those whom they represent.

I should like, in conclusion, to say a few words of a more general character. Responsible self-government for India is the goal set forth by Parliament in the Preamble of the Act of 1919; and it was with the full authority of the Government of the day that my noble friend the Foreign Secretary stated ten years later that the natural issue of India's progress as there contemplated—that is to say, in the Preamble of the Act of 1919—was the attainment of Dominion Status.

From that objective we never have had and have not now the smallest intention of departing. The purpose of the Act of 1935 was to provide that machinery whereby

the people of India might acquire that measure of political unity, which surely is the pre-requisite to the attainment by them of their eventual goal. Much has been said in disparagement of the measure, yet it should not be forgotten that it was the outcome of immense labour on the part of Indians and Britons alike and was based on the greatest measure of common agreement which was then obtainable.

And I would add this that even in the case of a written constitution provisions of the Statute are no more than the bony skeleton of a structure; flesh and blood, which give it life and vigour are added day by day by those engaged in working it. Within the framework practices take root and conventions grow up. The constitution becomes a living and growing organism deriving form and substance from its environment. The truth of that has been demonstrated by the two years' working of the Act in so far as it affects the provinces of British India, as I feel sure the Ministers of to-day, one of whom a little more than two years ago rejected it as of little worth, will be willing to admit. I believe that similar experience of the working of the federal provisions of the Act would be attended by similar results.

But if, at the end of the upheaval caused by the war, when the circumstances may well differ markedly from what they are to-day, there is a desire on the part of those concerned for modifications of particular features of the plan, then His Majesty's Government declare now that they will in such circumstances be very willing to enter into consultation with representatives of the several communities, parties and interests in India and with Indian Princes with a view to securing their aid and co-operation in the framing of such modifications as may then seem desirable.

I say then because, in my view, it is not practicable, nor do I believe that it would be in the true interest of the people of India themselves to endeavour, while we are all labouring under the strain and stress of a life-and-death struggle to embark upon the task of immense complexity and one, moreover, which would inevitably give rise to no little controversy in India itself.

And that brings me back to what I said earlier in the course of my remarks as to the root cause of the difficulties in the domain of constitutional building in India. What



we have to work for is elimination of those communal antagonisms which still militate against the political unity of India.

You cannot abolish them by merely closing your eyes to their existence. You must face them and search for means to remove their underlying forces. I believe that the menace, which now confronts all of us Englishmen, Hindus, Muslims, Princes and peoples alike, may aid us to achieve what hitherto has eluded our grasp. Can we not, standing shoulder to shoulder for a common purpose, be banded together in the comradeship of arms and learn to view in truer perspective against the background of the supreme and imminent peril—for what would it profit India if the forces of aggression and of evil emerged victorious from this war—those internal and domestic differences which have hitherto raised such formidable obstacles along the road to that goal towards which the peoples of both countries have determined to travel.

This then is my appeal to the peoples of India that in comradeship with us while presenting a united front to the forces ranged against us they strive after that agreement among themselves without which they will surely fail to achieve that unity, which is an essential of nationhood of which those with vision among her leaders have long dreamed and which must surely be the crowning achievement of long and intimate political relationship between the peoples of Great Britain and India.

#### ZETLAND'S REPLY

Lord Zetland replying to the debate said that he would like to associate himself whole-heartedly with the many expressions of admiration of the Viceroy's conduct of his high office, which had fallen from so many lips. No man, said Lord Zetland, could have brought to his task greater sympathy, greater energy and to some extent, greater knowledge of the immediate problems of India, with which he had had to grapple.

Of course, there can be no going back in the constitutional field in India. We have been going steadily forward and I was little surprised when I heard Lord Sankey speak as it

seemed to me in somewhat disparaging terms that we had set up as our goal in India the attainment of Dominion Status.

Surely Lord Sankey who was himself so largely concerned with the framing particularly of the Federal provisions of the Act of 1935 must realise that these things cannot be unduly hurried, that there are many interests in India, which must be taken into account and I should have thought that the Act of 1935 itself showed considerable advance along the road towards the goal, which we have set ourselves.

Lord Sankey suggested that the Premiers of Provinces should be members of the group. On their merits no one would welcome more warmly than I their presence on such a body.

I cannot help thinking that Lord Sankey must have forgotten a little the geographical conditions of India. How are the Prime Ministers of these various Provinces, some of them two or three days' journey by train from Delhi, going to discharge their onerous functions, which will devolve upon them in their own Provinces, if they are to meet at Delhi as members of this Consultative Committee? I do not think, it would be a practical proposition, warmly as I would welcome it, if it were.

With regard to the composition of the proposed Committee, some of you have spoken as if it were assumed that it was going to be a nominated body. Not at all. The panels are either going to be nominated or elected by political parties themselves and when I said that the Viceroy would invite from time to time members, whose names occurred on the panels, what I had in mind was the difficulty in a country like India of always being able to secure the whole of a particular group. There might be, for example, a representative of the Congress, whose habitual place of residence was the Presidency of Madras. When such a man was in Delhi he could, of course, serve on the Committee, but if he were in Madras and the Committee were called to consider matters, it would in all probability be impossible for him to attend. That is why the suggestion is made that the panels should constitute a comparatively large body on which the Viceroy would from time to time be able to draw for discussion of a particular subject. On

page nine of the White Paper, the Viceroy says: "I hope in the very near future to enter into consultation with political leaders in connection with this Consultative Group." With regard to its functions, I think perhaps the fact has been a little overlooked that the Legislative Assembly will, of course, continue to be in existence. This group is not in any sense intended to displace the Legislative Assembly, where matters can be discussed freely and openly. This is rather a group of people representing different schools of political thought in India whom the Viceroy can take into his confidence, with whom he can frankly and freely discuss matters connected with the conduct of the war and war activities and such matters that in times of war it might be inappropriate to discuss in a more public manner.

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## STATEMENTS ON THE VICEREGAL PRONOUNCEMENT

October 18, 1939

*Mahatma Gandhi has issued the following statement regarding the Viceroy's declaration:*

The Viceregal declaration is profoundly disappointing. It would have been better if the British Government had declined to make any declaration whatsoever. The long statement made by the Viceroy simply shows that the old policy of 'divide and rule' is to continue. So far as I can see, the Congress will be no party to it, nor can the India of Congress conception be a partner with Britain in her war with Herr Hitler. The Indian declaration shows clearly that there is to be no democracy for India, if Britain can prevent it. Another Round Table Conference is promised at the end of the War. Like its predecessor it is bound to fail. The Congress asked for bread and it has got a stone. What the future has in store for India, I dare not foretell. I do not blame the Viceroy or the leaders of Britain for the unfortunate result. The Congress will have to go into wilder-

ness again before it becomes strong and pure enough to reach its objective. I have no doubt that Congressmen will await the Working Committee's decision.

*Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the Congress President issued the following statement on the Viceroy's declaration:*

The Viceroy's announcement is disappointing to the extreme but not at all surprising. Its tragedy is that sympathy and goodwill in favour of Great Britain should have been allowed to dissipate leaving behind once again jetsam and flotsam of suspicion and distrust and ill-feeling. The Viceroy refers to and confirms the past announcements regarding the goal of British policy in India and promises a Round Table Conference at the end of the war as preliminary to the revision of the Government of India Act of 1935. The announcement of 1929 was made immediately before the Lahore Congress which considered it to be so inadequate and unsatisfactory as to justify a change in the Congress creed fixing complete independence of India as the object of the Congress and launching a campaign of civil disobedience which lasted from 1930-34. Sir Samuel Hoare's statement was made to satisfy people who had insisted on the incorporation of the goal of Dominion Status in the Act of 1935, which the British Government and the Parliament deliberately refused to incorporate in the Act. In spite of these declarations and other the Congress rejected the Act of 1935. It was not hoped that the reiteration of those very announcements which has been rejected without reserve—although they are now made in polite and consolidatory language, would satisfy any one and the Viceroy has anticipated the reception which his announcement is likely to get. We have had experience of round table conferences, their interminable discussions, their window-dressing, their representative character and above all their none too concealed attempt to take advantage of such differences and deficiencies as exist in this country, for most of which the British Government are themselves responsible.

There is another important announcement regarding the formation of a Consultative Group consisting of representatives elected by the Viceroy from amongst a panel nominated by different organisations. Its functions, as the name sug-

gests, would be consultative. It will have no power to come to a decision and will in effect have no other function than giving moral support to the decisions taken by others. There is no room now left for any one to doubt that British policy remains what it has always been and that all talk about democracy and resistance to aggression is not meant to apply to India.

Indeed the Prime Minister declared more than once that the war aim is protection of freedom of European countries and establishment of peace in Europe based on status quo. In a war fought for this purpose India can have no interest and victory for Britain can only imply continuance of the present condition not only for India but also for other exploited and suppressed people outside Europe. India will be false to her interest and untrue to the best interest of other suppressed nationalities if she helps imperialism to strengthen itself. It is still open to Britain to rule without her consent and even expect material help for the conduct of war, but Great Britain shall not have that spiritual support of India of which the Viceroy has spoken in such eloquent terms. The announcement has effectively destroyed the foundation for any such moral and spiritual support and war, as now appears to every one has always been a war for strengthening of Britain's imperial position in her possessions. Much advertised high aims are crumbled into dust at the first touch of reality. I hope that Congressmen will await with patience the determination and reply of the Working Committee and conduct themselves with restraint and dignity.

*Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru issued the following statement to the press:*

We have read the Viceroy's statement with deep regret. If this is the final answer of the British Government to the people of India, then, there is no common ground between the two and our path diverge completely.

The whole statement is a complete repudiation of all that India stands for, nationally and internationally. It is a statement which would have been out of date twenty years ago; today it has absolutely no relation to reality. There is no mention in it of independence, freedom, democracy or self-determination; no attempt even to justify the

dragooning of India into the war without reference to her people and her being forced to join an adventure for objectives which are not hers. These objectives appear clearly from the Viceroy's statement to be the preservation and maintenance of the British imperial and financial structure in India and abroad.

The "better international system", to which the British Premier has referred, is evidently meant to preserve and strengthen this structure. Apart from this, it relates, according to him, to the peoples of Europe and not to Asia or Africa. India continues where she is; the colonies remain where they are; imperialism is still meant to flourish.

All this seems to follow from the Viceroy's statement and if this is the aim of the war it is difficult to imagine that even the British Government, living as it does in an age that is past and done with, can expect any self-respecting Indian to co-operate with it.

The hand of friendship that the Congress had extended to the British people in this hour of world crisis has been spurned by their Government. How far that Government represents them, it is for them to say, but we have to consider the Viceroy's statement as England's reply to India.

What our next steps should be it would be premature and improper for us to say at this stage. That is for the Working Committee to decide and the Committee is meeting for that purpose soon. The hour is a grave one and requires all our united wisdom and courage and discipline and mutual forbearance. Let us bear ourselves with dignity and restraint and hold together in the cause of India's freedom.

*Sbri C. Rajagopalachariar, in a statement on the Viceroy's declaration says—*

It is a deeply disappointing statement. A great and unique occasion has been simply thrown away. Instead of a new courage and a new imagination befitting the great crisis which Britain and the world are passing through, a courage and an imagination that would have found its shape in a bold step and a few simple words which would have gone straight to the heart of the Indian nation, we have flung at us a language and an attitude all too familiar and in this

crisis inappropriate and most unfortunate.

It is not the way of dealing with a great and ancient country and a great organisation who were eager to help, if that help were appreciated and could be made free and honourable. Let us hope for the sake of liberty and civilisation that greater constructive imagination and greater wisdom may mark Britain's efforts in other phases of this war, than have been shown in this affair with the Indian National Congress.

*Mrs. Sarojini Naidu's Statement on the Viceregal  
Pronouncement*

*October 19, 1939*

Our internal disunity may undoubtedly be sometimes successfully exploited as a text to preach a plausible sermon against freedom of India, but in this supreme hour of international crisis it would have been an act of wisdom not to expose so clearly and cruelly the fundamental disparity between Indian ideals and British policies.

The gift of prophetic vision, which is the essence of great statesmanship is woefully lacking in the response to India's demand for an unequivocal enunciation of Britain's immediate and ultimate aims in regard to war and peace and particularly in relation to India.

Ours was a genuine, I may even say in the existing circumstances, generous offer of friendly co-operation in the common and dearly prized cause of democracy and freedom of the world. The answer leaves little hope, unless some timely miracle intervenes, that India and Britain can move forward together in fruitful comradeship rather than move apart in a spirit of conflict and bitterness. I pray that such a miracle might yet be wrought.

## AN INTERVIEW WITH GANDHIJI

October 21, 1939

We take the following from the 'Times of India.'

Requested to give a reply to *The Times of India's* editorial appeal addressed to him, Mr. Gandhi told me in a special interview that no amount of clarification or explanation of the Viceregal statement would make it acceptable so long as the precise demand of the Congress was not met. There was no evidence of a desire or readiness on the part of Great Britain to transfer power to Indians.

*The Times of India's* appeal related to the scope, authority and function of the conference of India's representatives, proposed to be called at the end of the war.

The journal drew attention to the following words from the Viceroy's statement: "His Majesty's Government recognise that when the time comes to resume consideration of the plan for the future Federal Government of India, and of the plan destined to give effect to the assurances given in Parliament by the late Secretary of State to which I have just referred, it will be necessary to reconsider in the light of the then circumstances to what extent the details of the plan embodied in the Act of 1935 remained appropriate."

*The Times of India* interpreted these words to mean that it would be open to the projected conference at the end of the war to consider Dominion Status. It requested Mr. Gandhi and the Congress to appreciate the value of such a conference and, if they had any doubt, to ask for an authoritative clarification of the scope of that conference.

The words quoted by *The Times of India*, thought Mr. Gandhi, were "too vague to admit of clarification; they left everything beautifully indefinite."

He added: "What the Congress wants is the clearest possible acceptance of the fact that India is to be treated as an independent nation. For India to become enthusiastic about participation in this war it is necessary to speak to her in the language of precision, admitting of no other meaning."

Proceeding, Mr. Gandhi said: "Surely what the Congress wants is easy enough to give, if the will is there. I miss



the will in the Viceregal declaration.

"And whom is the conference to consist of? Are they to be those to be invited by the Viceroy or the Secretary of State? How can they be called representative in the true sense of the term?"

In order to avoid any doubt, Mr. Gandhi continued, the Congress had suggested a representative assembly of men and women elected on the widest possible franchise. Such an assembly the Congress described by the accepted phraseology, namely, a constituent assembly. "How can this be objected to by any party which desires freedom for India? Is it right to invite people to say whether they want freedom or not? Should a slave be consulted as to the desirability of his freedom? He might be asked as to the manner thereof. This the constituent assembly can do. It is for that assembly to decide whether it is to be Dominion Status or what. It may be more or less. The people's representatives should have the fullest freedom to decide upon the nature and content of the freedom."

"It is surprising how the minorities are being played against the Congress. Surely the Congress has no quarrel with any of them. The Congress will safeguard the rights of every minority so long as they do not advance claims inconsistent with India's independence. The Muslims, the Scheduled Classes and every other class will be fully represented in the constituent assembly and they will have to decide their own special rights. Even the Princes and the zamindars have nothing to fear if they become, and appear, as representatives of the ryots. Independent India will not tolerate any interests in conflict with the true interests of the masses, whether the latter are known as Muslims, Scheduled Classes, Christians, Parsis, Jews, Sikhs, Brahmins and non-Brahmins or any other."

"But," said Mr. Gandhi, "I blame neither the Viceroy nor the British War Cabinet. Independence is not to depend upon the British or any one else's mercy. It will come when the people are ready for it. Evidently British statesmen think that the people of India are not ready. The Congress or any other organisation that seeks to represent the millions has to consolidate its strength and resources for the purpose."

Mr. Gandhi said he had hoped that British statesmen,

from the bitter experience of European turmoil, had turned over a new leaf; that hope was for the time being dashed to pieces.

Mr. Gandhi, proceeding, remarked that *The Times of India* should direct its appeal to the Englishmen and ask them to do the right thing by India in keeping with the professed war aims of Britain. He said he was grieved to find that the paper which had till the other day been urging the authorities to make a generous gesture "had suddenly changed its front". Judged by the paper's own past demands the Viceroy's statement was a poor response. Yet *The Times of India* praised it.

Mr. Gandhi concluded with the reply to the personal reference made to him in *The Times of India* editorial. He denied that he had been inconsistent or that he had deviated from his first statements in which he had expressed his sympathy for England and France. He said he still held the view. But now that the issue has been raised, he expected England to face the issue and give a satisfactory answer.

His advice to the Congress did not mean that India's support to the Allied cause should be at the expense of her own freedom. He would not be a party to India being tied to the chariot wheel of Britain. His prayer still was not only that Britain and France should win, but also that Germany should not be ruined.

He had no desire to rear India's freedom on the ashes of any of the belligerent Powers, even as he did not want the freedom of the European Powers to be built upon the ruins of India's freedom.

## 22

### WORKING COMMITTEE'S RESOLUTION

October 22, 1939

The Congress Working Committee has passed the following resolution on the Viceregal declaration on the 22nd inst. at Wardha:

The Working Committee are of opinion that the Viceregal statement in answer to the Committee's invitation for a clear declaration of Britain's war aims, particularly in their appli-

cation to India is wholly unsatisfactory and calculated to rouse resentment among all those who are anxious to gain, and are intent upon gaining, India's independence. This invitation was made not only on behalf of the people of India, but for millions of people all over the world, who were weary of war and violence, and Fascist and Imperialist systems which exploited nations and peoples and were ultimately the causes of war, and who yearned for a new order of peace and freedom. The Viceregal statement is an unequivocal reiteration of the old imperialistic policy. The Committee regard the mention of the differences among several parties as a screen to hide the true intention of Great Britain. What the Committee had asked for was a declaration of war aims as a test of Britain's *bona fides* regarding India, irrespective of the attitude of opposing parties and groups. The Congress has always stood for the amplest guarantee of the rights of minorities. The freedom the Congress claimed was not for the Congress or any particular group or community, but for the nation and for all communities in India that go to build that nation. The only way to establish this freedom and to ascertain the will of the nation as a whole is through a democratic process which gives full opportunity to all. The Committee must, therefore, regard the Viceroy's statement as in every way unfortunate. In the circumstances, the Committee cannot possibly give any support to Great Britain, for it would amount to an endorsement of the imperialist policy which the Congress has always sought to end. As a first step in this direction the Committee call upon the Congress Ministries to tender their resignations.

The Committee earnestly appeal to the nation to end all internal controversies in this hour of great crisis and to act unitedly in the cause of India's freedom. The Committee call upon all Congress Committees and Congressmen generally to be prepared for all developments and eventualities, and to show restraint of word and deed so that nothing may be said or done which is not in keeping with India's honour or the principles for which the Congress stands. The Committee warn Congressmen against any hasty action in the shape of civil disobedience, political strikes and the like. The Committee will watch the situation and the activities of the British Government in India, and will not hesitate to guide the

country to take further steps whenever the necessity for this arises. The Committee desire to impress upon all Congressmen that a programme of resistance, commensurate with the magnitude of the issue before the country, requires perfect discipline within Congress ranks and the consolidation of the Congress organisation.

The Working Committee realise that the non-violent resistance offered by the Congress in the past has sometimes been mixed with violence. The Committee desire to impress upon all Congressmen that any resistance that may have to be offered must be purged of all violence, and to remind them of the pledges taken to this effect as early as 1921 during the Congress session at Ahmedabad and repeated on many subsequent occasions.

## 23

## GANDHIJI'S CABLE TO "THE NEWS CHRONICLE"

*October 22, 1939*

In response to a request from *The News Chronicle* (London) Gandhiji sent to it the following cable:

I have no doubt whatsoever that the Viceregal statement on behalf of British Government in reply to Congress invitation could not have been made more irritating than it has proved to be. What Congress had asked was not an answer to India's demand for Independence, but it had reminded Britain of neglect to declare whether her war against Herr Hitler to preserve democracy included India. This had no connection with India's readiness to digest Independence. But the Congress demand was evidently misunderstood, and the Viceroy began a sort of Round Table Conference in which one member did not know what the other said to the Viceroy, and as a result of these talks he was instructed to make a statement wholly unrelated to the unprecedented upheaval going on in front of us. If the British Government wanted to measure the strength of the Congress and that of other political organizations, it should have been obvious that the Congress could not satisfy the Government standard. But the Congress had set before

itself a higher mission. The Congress wanted to help Britain by giving her the moral support which was its speciality and the only thing it could give. The Congress would not give this unless it was clear that Britain's political morality was wholly sound. I wish British Government would realize that India is not begging for independence. The Congress asked Britain to say that Britain would not resist Independence. The Hindu-Muslim and other difficulties are there beyond dispute. The question is whether Britain will stand aside and let India settle her own difficulties in her own way when the war is over. That is why the Congress has suggested a Constituent Assembly where every community will be fully represented to frame India's constitution. The mischief done is very real. The Working Committee have passed a mild resolution. It still affords scope for repairing the blunder. Will the British public realize that it is a blunder, or will they persist in the hypnotic belief that the India Office can never err and that India must always remain their milch cow? I can only say that the Congress will not rest and will give no rest till the goal is won. Its very existence depends upon its relentless pursuit of the goal which is no less than complete independence of India.

## 24

# PARLIAMENTARY SUB-COMMITTEE'S STATEMENT ON MINISTERIAL RESIGNATION

*October 23, 1939*

## *Instructions to Ministries and Legislative Parties:*

The Parliamentary Sub-Committee with the approval of the Working Committee issued the following instruction for the guidance of ministries and Congress parties in the Congress provinces:—

“The resolution of the Working Committee calls upon Congress Provincial Governments to tender their resignation. These resignations should be given after the Assembly meetings which have been convened for the purpose of discussing such

urgent business as may be pending but it is expected that resignations will be tendered by October 31, 1939.

"The Central Provinces and Orissa Assemblies have been convened to meet at the beginning of November and the Provincial Governments in these provinces will remain in office till after this meeting.

"Speakers and Deputy-Speakers and members of the Assemblies, Presidents and members of the Councils are expected to retain their offices and seats. Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries are the only persons who are at present expected to resign.

"With regard to the resolution to be moved in the Assemblies on war aims, suitable amendments should be made in view of the new developments."

## 25

### MAHATMA GANDHI'S MESSAGE TO FOREIGN NEWS AGENCIES

*October 23, 1939*

In response to a request made on behalf of a group of internationally important newspapers, Mahatma Gandhi gave a message putting forth briefly the Indian case. The papers that made the request were, the *New York Times*, the most influential daily journal in the U.S.A., the *Daily Herald*, Britain's leading labour daily, the *Paris Soir*, the *Popolo d'Italia* of Rome, the *National Tidende* of Copenhagen, the *Aften Posten*, the *Telegraaf* of Amsterdam, the *Tass News Agency* of Moscow, the *Arbizzi* of Madrid, the *Dagensnyther* of Stockholm, the *Swiss News Agency* of Geneva, the *Lancion* of Buenos Aires, the *Yormiri Shimbun* of Tokyo, the *Usis Nomi* of Helsumpors and the *Nation Belge* of Antwerp.

The Congress has demanded no constitutional change during the war. Its demand is for a declaration that Britain's war aims necessarily include India's independence according to the charter framed by her elected representatives after the war. This declaration should be acted up to, during the war to the utmost extent possible. The minority question is a bogey.

Not that it does not exist, but because its proper solution can come only out of the proposed Constituent Assembly. The burden of solving the tangle rests not on Britain, but on the Constituent Assembly.

According to Indian opinion, the Hindu-Muslim question is the direct product of British rule. The least the Congress could do was to withdraw the Congress Ministers from provincial administrations. Further action by the Congress will wholly depend upon Britain's handling of the crisis. The Congress has left the door open. It is for Britain to mend the mistake.

## 26

## SHRI RAJAGOPALACHARIAR'S STATEMENT ON WAR SITUATION

*October 23, 1939*

When I read the statement which the Viceroy chose to get authorised for issue last Tuesday night at Madras I was not only pained and disappointed but knew what was to happen next. The conclusion was foregone as it was arrived at yesterday in the Working Committee.

The Committee had with the approval of Mahatma Gandhi offered the fullest co-operation to the British Government, and the conditions demanded were in my considered judgment, the easiest and simplest from the point of view not of the people of India but of the Government of Great Britain. What were they?

1. That the Government of Great Britain should be willing to concede at the end of the war whatever constitution the people of India have agreed to not only as a majority agreement but with the seal and approval of all important minorities.

If the one and the only difficulty, namely disagreement should be happily removed, there could have been no difficulty for Great Britain, taking her professions at face value. As for the likelihood of such agreement being reached, those who believe in the higher power cannot but continue to hope

that every misfortune is a trial and training to reach the ultimate goal which they firmly believe to be India's destiny whatever her present state.

2. The other was a gesture, a gesture which also constitutionally speaking, was an essential requisite for carrying on the present Government of India in an efficient manner during the time of stress and strain.

If the representatives of the people are required for good Government under normal conditions, they are all the more required during a time when the resources of the country have to be organised and utilised in the best manner possible to meet a critical state of affairs imposed from outside. As long as there was a pretence of constituting a proper Central Government it was excusable to postpone things and carry on with senior permanent service men as ministers of some sort and a legislature continually functioning as opposition and nothing else.

But when the Federation plan had definitely been suspended, it would be intolerable to maintain the permanent service control over and encroaching on the field of 11 Governments in the provinces shaped in the frame of democracy.

Two and half years of responsibility in the provincial field, if it did not produce the change of psychology in the British Government and courage to proceed towards responsibility at the Centre, the experiment should stand self-condemned.

Both conditions laid down therefore were essential and easiest that could be conceived. Those conditions were conceived, not to take advantage of the war situation but indeed to provide for the war situation.

After 20 years of varying phases of non-cooperation, resistance and opposition, the Congress under the advice of Mahatma Gandhi and with the co-operation of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and the overwhelming majority of All-India Congress Committee offered the fullest co-operation setting aside all previous prejudice and for the time being even the overriding claims of non-violence. The proffered hand of friendship, having been summarily and thoughtlessly rejected, the conclusion was foregone.

Perhaps I should not say 'thoughtless' when indeed so much thought was bestowed on it; but a kind of thoughtless-



ness, as I call it, results from unjustified distrust and want of imagination.

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# PANDIT MADAN MOHAN MALAVIYA'S STATEMENT

*October 29, 1939*

During the war of 1914-18, India offered her support to the British Government. An enormous sum was paid as money contribution and more than 1,200,000 men were sent overseas. A hundred and one thousand died in the war or became casualties.

India gave her support without imposing any conditions, but as Mahatma Gandhi wrote to the then Viceroy, though India did not bargain, she expected that her status would be raised to one of equality with the dominions, but that was not done. The measures of reform, which were introduced after the war were regarded by Indians as disappointing and unsatisfactory and India has been struggling all along to get the substance of independence.

At this period has come the present war. The Viceroy has appealed to Indians, and among them to Congressmen, to support the British Government in the war. The Congress offered her moral support to Government, but before deciding what further support it could give the Congress Working Committee asked the Government to declare the aims and objects of the war and also to give an assurance that the principles of freedom and democracy, for which the Allies were fighting, would be impartially applied to India also.

In response to this, the Viceroy made his declaration, which the Congress has declared unsatisfactory and has decided to call upon the Congress Governments to resign. In the circumstances, the Congress cannot be blamed for adopting the course it has done.

It is obvious this would weaken the cause of the Allies. England with India will be much more powerful than England without India will be, but it is equally clear that

England cannot get India's whole-hearted support without giving the assurances, which the Congress has asked for.

It is to be hoped that the British Government will revise its decision and make an unambiguous declaration that the principles of freedom and democracy for which Britain is fighting will be impartially applied in the case of India.

India's national interest and honour demand that she should be placed on a footing of equality with the other self-governing nations of the world without further delay. Too much stress has been laid on religious and other differences existing among us and on the question of protecting the interests of the minorities. If once the British Government will decide to establish full responsible government in this country, we shall meet and agree to provide in the constitution for the protection of all legitimate interests of minorities.

In this connection it is important to mention that religious differences between the French and English in Canada were of the acutest kind when, on the recommendation of Lord Durham, responsible government was established in that country in 1837. Canada has prospered and become powerful under such government. She gave the most powerful support to Britain in the last war and is doing so in the present war. If India becomes free to administer her own affairs, similar good results may well be expected of her.

In the Royal Proclamation published on the passing of the Government of India Act of 1919, the King-Emperor said:—

"Let me trust that both the authorities and the people will co-operate so to work the reforms as to secure the early establishment of full responsible government."

Twenty years have elapsed since then and it is high time that full responsible government were established in India.

The opportunity is unique. If the reasonable demand of India is met, she will be permanently bound by ties of friendship to England to the advantage of both the countries and the two combined will be a powerful factor in promoting peace and happiness in the civilised world.

If, on the other hand, England fails to give back to

India what is her due, she will alienate India for ever, for forces hostile to England are gaining ground every day. It is devoutly to be hoped that England will not miss this great opportunity.

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## INDIA DEBATE IN HOUSE OF COMMONS

*October 26, 1939*

### MR. WEDGWOOD BENN'S SPEECH

Opening the debate on India in the War in the House of Commons, Mr. Wedgwood Benn (Labour, Manchester, Gorton) said, "My purpose is to offer some words on the White Paper and the Viceroy's statement and, in particular, to see, if by a debate, we might make some contribution to the prevention of any mischief which may follow in the conduct of the War. If we criticise the Government's policy, it must be remembered that the overriding consideration in the mind of every member is how we can contribute to the successful issue of this War. Therefore, if I say anything critical, I say it with that always in mind.

I think it is a pity that a document of this importance was issued without consultation with the Leader of the Opposition or, so far as I know, with the Leader of the Liberal Opposition either. In 1929 when the Labour Government prepared a similar statement, I myself sent it by air to Mr. Baldwin in France and discussed it with Lord Reading. I think that such a thing is desirable, because in different parties we have different angles from which we look on the Indian problem. It is desirable that we should maintain a united policy in the treatment of the Indian problem.

But there is the White Paper and there are the replies of the Congress and other Indian parties. It is a clumsy document. It has a certain Indian tinge. It is like an elephant. It is massive. It is clumsy in action, but is followed by something very insignificant.

But it has provoked two very penetrating questions from Mr. Gandhi.

The first question is 'What are your War aims?'

The second question is 'If they are to secure freedom, then are we to share in that freedom?'

Those are the two questions to be answered. Before I attempt to deal with these two matters, I would remind the House that the participation of India in the War is no small matter. The contribution of India in the last War was massive. The Princes in accordance with the traditions of their order showed then, as they are showing now, their loyalty to the King-Emperor. The martial qualities of the Muslim forces has never been in doubt and remember that the Moslems can enter this War with a better heart than in the last War, because we have three great Mohammedan Powers, Iraq, Egypt and Turkey, in alliance with ourselves. The Mohammedans of India need have no fear that this War will be followed by a Treaty of Sevres.

Think what India did between 1914 and 1918. I find that India contributed in money over 146 millions in gifts and contributions in support of forces and in stores, eighty millions. She put her ships at the service of the British Navy and in addition, over one million Indians went to the front. In addition to this material aid, we had the moral support of the greatest of all Indians, Mr. Gandhi, then as now, a true friend of this country and who is a champion of the cause for which we are now fighting.

Indians now say "We have gone into the War and we were never consulted." That is true but from the German point of view from September 9 possibly before India was the target and in justice to the Viceroy and perhaps to the other Dominions, but certainly to India, it must be said that Germany was on the march towards the East. If it had not been for Soviet Russia and the Turkish Treaty, Germany might have gone from Berlin to Vienna, from Vienna to Prague, and from Prague to Warsaw and further. It had to be stopped. We in London do not want this to go on, nor do Indians in Delhi. From the Viceroy's point of view, we have to remember that he had to act very swiftly. India was in danger and he had a duty to perform in seeing that it was safeguarded. One of the minor benefits we get from the sufferings connected with the present emergency is a little growth of sympathy

with the Indians themselves. That cascade of orders which come from the vote office of the House of Commons, day after day, gives us some idea of what it means to be under regulations and subject to laws in which we have no hand.

You cannot walk about for fear of treading on the little ant hills of bureaucrats. India lives under this rule continuously.

But the main facts are these: "India was in danger and is in danger and morally there could not be any wider divergence than exists between the philosophy of Hitler and the philosophy of Mr. Gandhi. What is the goal of the British policy in India? It is Dominion Status. A great deal of unnecessary confusion has arisen on this matter. It is said that the definition of Dominion Status is obscure and out of date. I do not agree. The declaration of 1929 which is now accepted and confirmed by the Government itself came three years after the Imperial Conference of 1926. In that Imperial Conference, the meanings of words, 'Dominion Status' were set out by a master of clear statement—Lord Balfour."

After quoting Balfour's statement, Mr. Benn continued, "I know of no definition that would better satisfy the demands put forward by the patriots of India than the definition given in the Imperial Conference of 1926 and confirmed by the Government of 1929, by Lord Irwin and again confirmed in the White Paper. Some people say why you did not put that in the Act of 1935. What is material is what is the trend of British policy and as to that we can all speak from our personal experience. No one can have sat in this House for forty years without being deeply impressed with the changes that have taken place. I am so deeply impressed with what has happened in my own life-time that I am sure that it is best to remove those doubts which exist in Indian minds as to what our goal is.

Mr. Benn who was at times inaudible to the press gallery went on to say that there had been an advance towards freedom. He was understood to say there had sometimes been opposition by certain interests and sometimes there had been genuine caution. But in the end there had always been an acceptance of change and after that, always success and success came, then, that policy was agreed as the policy of this Commonwealth.

There had been notable instances of this in Ireland and in South Africa. Lord Asquith's Home Rule Bill for Ireland was opposed by the Conservative Party, but Dominion Status for Ireland was agreed to by their leaders in the Treaty of 1922. On that basis, Eire stood today by her own free will in a position of neutrality without any voice raised in criticism.

He did not know what more freedom could be enjoyed than that, but the case of South Africa was even more striking. There was the Boer War, "a costly and foolish endeavour opposed by everybody of good sense."

One of the first things he remembered when he entered the House in 1906 was a youthful Under-Secretary explaining to the House the terms of the Transvaal constitution. Among the speeches that were made in opposition was one by the then recently returned Leader of the Opposition who denounced the constitution and described it as 'an experiment, the most reckless experiment ever tried.' He was replied to—I am quoting from the official record—by Sir Campbell Bannerman who declared that the speech just made was one of the most 'unworthy, provocative and mischievous.'

Still referring to the debate on Transvaal constitution, Mr. Benn mentioned the speech by another Opposition speaker who asked whether we could trust anyone at that time and who asked if it would be possible to trust General Smuts.

This was the very man Smuts who brought South Africa in on the side of Britain in the War and that is the rule which past history shows to be the basis of the policy underlining the construction of the British Commonwealth. I believe sincerely that India stands on the same road. If you are asking India to make sacrifices which she is being asked to make, surely she is entitled to be assured that the cause for which this country is fighting is also her cause.

It must be remembered that we stand at the bar of world opinion. It is up to us to prove before the world that we are sincere in the professions we make.

Lord Linlithgow had made practical suggestions. He suggests that in order that Indian public opinion and efforts should be associated with the Government in the course of the War Princes and major political parties should nominate

candidates from whom he would select advisors.

That may be good or it may be a worthless offer. It is impossible to say. It may be no more than a committee to organise a fete or it may be something of real authority and partnership. If it is the first, then Indian leaders have a right to reject it, but if it is the second then I think they should consider it.

I believe that in the existing Council the Viceroy has the power to nominate Ministers without portfolio. Is it not possible that members of these panels put forward by the major interests in India should form the corps from which the Viceroy could select. I do not know, but I am anxious that nothing should happen now between us and India to hinder the conduct of this righteous war.

There was the question of the constitution of the Assembly itself. Election has been postponed. I believe it is five years since there has been any election to the Central Legislature.

Mr. Wedgwood Benn asked, "If there is any way of securing a reflection of what I believe to be India's keen moral interest on the side of the Allies and this country. From the Indian side there is the danger that any makeshift might perhaps be an obstacle to greater and more important fundamental changes later.

Mr. Benn referred to the setting up in London of an imperial war cabinet and said "if you are going to have Prime Ministers from the Dominions in London you should have representatives of Princes and others here in London so that they may associate themselves with the conduct of the war. In this suggestion and especially in the first suggestion put forward by the Viceroy I think it is possible that we may find what the Viceroy called the germ of fuller and broader association."

With regard to the amendment of the 1935 Act Mr. Benn said: "That is admitted to be necessary by the Viceroy in the White Paper and it is far the most important thing. It is suggested in the White Paper that nothing could be done in this matter until after war. That no legislation could be passed in this house until after the war I agree. Mr. Gandhi says so and I agree. But we have before our eyes the example of 1917 when in the middle of the war Mr.

Montagu went to India and laid the foundation for the Act of 1919.

When you read those reports you would see in the introduction that the presence of Commission in India did nothing to hinder India's part in the war. Indeed the presence of the Commission in India did a great deal to stimulate India's support which we sorely needed; in preparation all these things are painstaking and difficult but necessary. We ourselves have to do some very hard thinking but here I would quote the proverb with which I am sure Sir Samuel Hoare will agree and which I might offer to Sir John Anderson also "fine words butter no parsnip". We have to decide where we stand and how far we are prepared to go and what we are willing to do to make a reality of the freedom of India.

Going on to refer to defence, Mr. Benn said: "The question of defence in India does not stand where it did in 1930. We need the maximum of effort that India can make. We have improved it by an enlarged contribution that is or will be forthcoming as a result of the Chatfield Committee's report. We will not get the maximum contribution unless Indian responsibility and goodwill is behind it. Finally it must not be supposed that India is not effected by decision on foreign affairs made in this house. This was especially the case regarding policy in the Far East. If there were some way in which her opinion could be given weight, I feel sure that it would add clearly to the strength of our foreign policy.

Mr. Benn went on to refer to the minority problem in India, stating: "India is not the only country that has a minority problem. Every country has one but some have solved the problem and some have not. Canada has solved hers and South Africa has solved the racial problem. I look forward to the day when we shall see a United Ireland. In the same way but on a much more massive scale India has a minority problem. I should say, therefore, that when the conference comes, the Hindu-Moslem problem must be solved by India itself. We require a conference truly representative of all India. I think it might meet in India and the task of any delegation we sent there should be in broad terms to set the seal on any agreement which Indians themselves may come to. Turning to the deadlock in India, Mr. Benn said that it was a very serious thing for us and added: "We



stand before the world and a deadlock in the growth of self-Government in India is extremely damaging to our prestige and I hope the Government is fully conscious that it is necessary to make an effort to end that deadlock. Also it is a problem for Indian leaders. Those eight provinces rank with many European states. You have Congress Ministries and you have Governors. The Governor has many safe-guards. Two years ago when the Congress were invited to form ministries they hesitated because they wanted assurance against safe-guards being used. No assurance was given but safe-guards have not been used. They were paper safe-guards. The conference of Responsible Government induced a sense of responsibility that made it totally unnecessary to use safe-guards.

Continuing Mr. Benn said Indian leaders in these Provinces have set in motion policies and schemes in harmony with the spirit of their own people. They have done that for those who elected them to those governments. No one is asking them to relinquish the task and everyone desires them to continue in their responsibility. If they find it necessary to abandon those who sent them to discharge those duties it is a very serious decision for them to take. India is asked to enter this war beside Great Britain and France. When India asks for a definition of our war aims and we describe them as the defence of our interests I think that is not only foolish but untrue. We care about our interests but what do neutrals care about them. Yet, if our war aim is the defence of a great principle you can rally not only India but the whole world to it. And that is what it is. We are defending freedom for ourselves and for India and in fact she is defending freedom for herself and others weaker than she. Herr Hitler stands for everything that Indians hate—bureaucracy, centralised and brutal, suppression of religious thought, subjugation of native culture, domination of race under subjugation of war and deification of brutal force. How can India do anything true to her own ideals but fight against it?

It is not only that India is asked to come to the side of Britain. That is only a partial statement. She is asked to come to the rescue of our country in this matter and save ourselves and others as well. I think of all those now voice-

less victims inside Nazi prisons. I think of millions of Poles, Austrians, Czechs, Slovaks, Socialists and Christians. It is their heart that beats when they hear that some champion of the freedom they have lost is on the move. When they make that appeal to India I do not believe that leaders of Indian opinion can forget that ideal.

#### SIR SAMUEL HOARE'S SPEECH

Mr. Wedgwood Benn and I have very often confronted each other in the field of Indian debate. We have sometimes disagreed and very strongly disagreed but we have sometimes agreed. To-night in the debate that should assuage, rather than stimulate bitterness, let us for a few moments look back upon the occasions on which we have agreed. I very well remember one of them when he and I some eight or nine years ago in this House were defending Lord Irwin from criticism of those who said he ought not to have had conversations with Mr. Gandhi. Mr. Benn and I took the view and I believe we take it still, that when political opponents meet, it is better not to regard Government as holy of holies into which only orthodox dare enter. I am sure that he and I are agreed that to-day it is a matter of satisfaction that the Viceroy should see leaders of the principal parties concerned, even most extreme leaders—even my fellow old Harrovian Pandit Nehru. Let me say in passing what remarkable institution must be my old school which in the course of a single generation has produced Lord Baldwin, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and the present First Lord of Admiralty. I must not be drawn aside into meditations upon old school tie but must go back and I do so with great pleasure to the eloquent, sympathetic and helpful speech to which we have just listened.

Since Mr. Wedgwood Benn and I last took part in these Indian debates, many events of staggering importance have taken place in the world. Catastrophes have come upon us; hopes have been frustrated; disillusionment has been common; evil has triumphed in many parts of the habitable globe. It has been a black picture but black as that picture has been, there have at any rate been some bright corners. There has been India. In the world of tumult, there has been this

great sub-continent of 350 million souls at peace within its boundaries. At a time when democracies were being destroyed in Europe, we have seen eleven great democratic Governments come into being in India and join their forces with democratic peoples of the world. These ought surely to be grounds for great satisfaction to every member of the House.

Four years ago, there were some who honestly thought that Provincial Government would be a failure. They asked us over and over again in the long Indian debates: 'Will these Governments be able to maintain their stability? Will they be able to control their finances? Will they be able most important of all, to maintain law and order for millions of human beings to whom they will be responsible?' I am glad to think that if some of our hopes were dupes at any rate most of our fears would have proved to be liars and that to-day we can claim that in a world in which there have been a great many constitutional crashes in recent years there stands out this great constitutional success of Provincial Autonomy in India.

It was with this background of the Indian achievement that on September 3 of this year, India and the British Commonwealth of Nations were faced with war. The crisis found India united. It found India united in its determination to resist brute force and in the realisation that danger was a common danger threatening every part of the British Commonwealth of nations. It was in face of this unity that the Viceroy who, during the whole course of his career in India and during many years that he was occupied in the Joint Select Committee in this country, showed his whole-hearted and sincere desire for Indian goodwill and co-operation. It was at this moment that he took the steps with the object of availing himself to the full of this united feeling in India and this common purpose that should bind India and the rest of the countries of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

As Mr. Wedgwood Benn has said, the Viceroy first had a series of interviews with the leaders of Indian opinion and as a result of those interviews he made two definite proposals. The first was rather in the nature of a pledge. It was a clear and definite statement that at the end of the war, there would

be a reconsideration of the constitutional problem in the light of the experience of recent years. Secondly, with a view to availing himself of Indian advice and with the intention of bringing Indian leaders within his confidence, he suggested that a Consultative Committee should be formed to discuss with him many problems arising out of the war and to bring him into the closest and most constant contact with the trends of Indian opinion.

I will say a word about both these proposals. The proposal regarding the Consultative Committee was made with the full desire to obtain the greatest possible co-operation with the principal bodies of Indian public opinion. The Congress, admittedly the greatest party in India, rejected it. Non-Congress India, representing, it must be remembered, many millions of Indians, substantially accepted it. It may be asked would it not have been possible for the Viceroy to have gone further and made some kind of proposal that would have avoided this division of opinion between Congress and non-Congress India? This is the first question, and it is a very important question to which, I would invite the attention of the House. If the members are to follow its implications, they must recall to their minds some of the most important discussions that took place over the Government of India Act. They centered round the pledge of Dominion Status and the aim of the Indian policy. These pledges, as Mr. Wedgwood Benn has said, were repeated time after time. They were reaffirmed in very precise terms in the speech with which I introduced the second reading of the Government of India Bill. I made it clear, and I make it clear again to-day, that we stood by Lord Irwin's pledge and that when we spoke of Dominion Status, we meant what we said and did not mean some system of Government that deprived India of full status of equality with other members of the British Commonwealth.

There are no two kinds of Dominion Status as some people seem to think. The Dominion Status that we contemplated was Dominion Status which has been described by Mr. Wedgwood Benn—Dominion Status of 1926. I went on to state that Dominion Status is not a prize that is given to a deserving community but is the recognition of the facts that actually exist. As soon as these facts exist in India

—and in my view the sooner they exist the better the aim of our policy will be achieved. If there are difficulties in the way, they are not of our making. They are inherent in the many divisions between the classes and communities in the great sub-continent. It must be the aim of Indians themselves to remove these divisions just as it should be our aim to help Indians in their task. So far are we from wishing to divide and govern that we regard these divisions as a calamity and are ready to do our utmost to remove them. We have shown our good faith in the matter. We showed it when we made the Communal Award. At that time, supposing we had wished to divide and conquer, we might very well have said, 'Settle your own communal differences first. Until you have settled them, there can be no constitutional advance.' We did not take that course but at great risk to ourselves and in the face of much criticism we made the Communal Award without which Provincial Autonomy would have been impossible.

But in spite of our Award, these divisions still exist and until they are removed, we have responsibilities to the minorities that we cannot repudiate. That was our position in 1935 and it is our position to-day. We wish to see these divisions removed but we shall never get them removed, if we shut our eyes to their existence and refuse to admit that they are there. It is these divisions that have made so difficult the task of setting up responsible Government at the centre and of achieving the great ideal of an All India Federation.

The Princes are afraid of domination by British India, the Moslems are firmly opposed to a Hindu Majority at the Centre. The Depressed classes and other minorities genuinely believe that responsible Government, meaning a Government dependent on the Hindu Majority, will sacrifice their interests. These anxieties still exist. I wish they did not. But as long as they exist, it is impossible for the Government to accept the demand for immediate and full responsibility at the Centre on a particular date.

If we did so, we should be false to the pledges that time after time we have given in the most solemn words to the Muslims, other minorities and the European community. It may be said, supposing that full and immediate responsibility

at the Centre is impossible, are there not other steps that could be taken to show our good faith and to make clear to India that that goal is just as much in our minds to-day as it was when we made those pledges four years ago? Mr. Wedgwood Benn himself made a number of these suggestions this afternoon and I will try to deal with them.

Firstly, let me disabuse him of the idea which I think he held that we are contemplating in the near future an Imperial War Cabinet in London and that in it India ought to be represented by more than a single representative. At present there is no intention to set up an Imperial War Cabinet of that kind. If and when the time comes, I will certainly remember the observations he has made on the subject and I imagine they will be given extremely careful attention.

Next he spoke on the project that has been discussed more than once before. He asked: Would it not be possible to introduce into the Viceroy's Council political leaders who would hold portfolios in certain of the great Departments? As I have said, this is not a new proposal. I remember it being made during the joint discussions of the Joint Select Committee.

I think the leader of the opposition himself made it at one time. We went fully into it then and at that time we found ourselves confronted by certain difficulties in the way of its adoption. I do not enumerate those difficulties to-night.

I wish to close no door; I wish to explore every possibility within the ambit of the Government of India Act. I agree with very much of what Mr. Wedgwood Benn said as to the impossibility of having constitutional reform by stages in wartime or contemplating another Government of India Act when we are in the throes of this terrible struggle. I do not elaborate the difficulties that are inherent in a suggestion of this kind.

He knows them as well as I do. But so far as the British Government are concerned, we see no reason why provided that difficulties are remembered, this proposal should not be very carefully considered.

The second of the Viceroy's proposals was the proposal of the Consultative Committee. As Mr. Wedgwood Benn said,

the Consultative Committee may mean anything or nothing. It may merely be a device for sidetracking the Opposition or it may be an attempt to obtain real co-operation.

The Congress, in my view, with undue haste has assumed that the Viceroy's Consultative Committee means nothing; that it is merely a device for the purpose of postponing constitutional advance. The Princes and the Moslems and other parties do not take this view. They believe that a body of this kind can be of real value to India and that, if it is set up, it will prove to be a further step towards and not away from responsible Government.

I feel that the Congress have been too hasty in their repudiation of this proposal. Let them and other political leaders clear up any doubts that they have as to the scope of its working and personnel that would be members of it. If they do, I believe they will find that it is the definite intention of the Viceroy to take Indian political leaders into his confidence on many problems that arise out of the conduct of the war and that it is his convinced belief that if Indian leaders of different parties and communities in British India and Indian India meet to discuss these manifold questions, their advice will carry the greatest possible weight with the Indian Executive; and perhaps, even more important, that their meetings by bringing together divergent interests will materially help to provide that basis of agreement among Indians themselves which is essential to swift constitutional advance.

I believe that the great possibilities of consultation of this kind have not been sufficiently appreciated. If they are fully used—and I give an undertaking that the Viceroy is anxious to make the fullest use of them—they may well prove to be the bridge that is needed to carry Indians over the great divide of communal bitterness that at present stands chiefly in the way of constitutional advance. If it be the case that these wartime meetings will make easier constitutional discussions that will take place after the war, what a calamity it would be, if for some reason or other, they were not started.

Mr. Wedgwood Benn spoke of the discussions that took place in the last war on the subject of the constitution. He mentioned the Montagu-Chelmsford discussions and asked whether it would be possible for discussions of that kind to take place in the course of this war. I do not wish to give a

final answer but I would point out that in certain respects the situation to-day differs a good deal from the situation at the time of the Montagu-Chelmsford discussions. The issues had not then become so bitter as they have to-day. I am thinking more particularly of the communal issue. Further, at any rate at the beginning of a war, it seems to me impossible for discussions of that kind to take place. The Montagu-Chelmsford discussions only took place, I think, three years after the beginning of the last war. As I have said, however, I would rather not give a final answer to-night on a point of that kind.

Nor indeed would I give a final answer on another question Mr. Wedgwood Benn has raised, namely, that there should be a general election in India. At any rate, at the beginning of a war a general election would seem to me to be almost impossible. In India, officials are working night and day on war work. Moreover, there would be the fact that the communal feelings would, I am sure, be very much aroused in an election and while again I do not want to dogmatise and use terms like "never" and "in no circumstances", I would say that as things are to-day, a general election to the Central legislature would, in my opinion, be impossible.

To come back to the broad question of consultation. The Viceroy has not tied himself down to the exact methods of this consultation. It is essentially a question to be settled between him and the political leaders. I am able to state that he is ready to discuss the method and details with the leaders and he proposes without delay to send invitations to meet him for these discussions. Until these and other discussions take place, I claim that it would be a blunder of the first magnitude to take up an irrevocable position. Let the Indian leaders weigh these possibilities. Let them meet and discuss them once again with the Viceroy. And let them also ponder once again upon the alternatives.

As regards the alternative of direct and immediate responsibility at the Centre. I hope I will convince the House that in the present circumstances, it is impossible to accept an alternative of that kind. I come to another alternative and I would ask the Indian leaders seriously once again to ponder upon it. I wish, indeed, that I had not to make any reference to it at all. It is the alternative of non-coopera-



tion, an alternative under which the Indian Congress goes its own way and the British Government and the minority communities in India go theirs. If it came to this issue, we should have no choice. The King-Emperor's Government must be carried on and it would be carried on with efficiency, with strength and with justice. We, like any other Government in similar circumstances, would give the Viceroy our full support. But let every man of goodwill in India and Great Britain contemplate the waste that such a chapter of non-co-operation would mean. There would be a waste of all our constitutional efforts with these many years of Round Table Conferences, Joint Select Committees and debates in this House. There would be the waste of all the effort we have made to bring to an end the grim chapters of non-co-operation and to make it easier for the Indians and the British to work together towards the solution of these great problems.

When I went to the India Office, I found non-co-operation in full blast. During four years that I was the Secretary of State like Mr. Wedgwood Benn who was my predecessor, almost my sole effort was to bring the British and the Indians together and to put an end to this chapter of wasted effort and miserable controversy. I hoped that when the Act came into force, this chapter would be brought to an end. But it is here now in the face of the greatest crisis that has ever confronted the world, a crisis in which our danger is India's and India's danger ours, in which our determination to set up a new and better order in the world is as great as India's and India's is as great as ours. There is a grave risk of our drifting into a position in which we shall be wrangling with each other instead of fighting the enemy on the common front.

I am told, though I can scarcely believe it, that it is being said in some quarters in India that the British Government is searching for a conflict. I repudiate that suggestion with all the power I have. The British Government wants co-operation and not conflict, the British Government wants to see the aim of its policy achieved and conditions realised in which India can take its true place in the British Commonwealth of free peoples. Non-co-operation may put the clock back for years. Whether its promoters desire it or not, non-co-operation leads to Civil Disobedience, to breaches of

Law and Order and to a vicious circle of riot and repression from which we had hoped to have escaped for ever. Until these things actually happen, I will not believe that they are going to happen. I shall continue to believe that when these great peoples of our own and the peoples of India are faced with a common danger and inspired with a common ideal, non-co-operation of any large section of a community would be a calamity and futility of the first magnitude. Millions of Indians in British and in the States agree with this view. They wish to co-operate with us just as much as we wish to work with them. And the Congress party itself—I quote words of Mr. Gandhi spoken three days ago, ‘wanted to help Britain by giving her moral support, which was its speciality. The Congress would not give this unless it was clear that Britain’s morality was wholly sound.’

I claim that our position is as sound as a bell. In good faith and perfect sincerity, we have started India on the greatest constitutional experiment that the world had ever seen. We have long ago set aside imperialistic ambitions. We believe that our mission in the world is not to govern other people but to help other people to govern themselves. It was in this spirit that Parliament passed a series of great acts which gave the dominions their free constitution. It was in this spirit that we passed the Government of India Act of 1935 and under which, of our own free will, we transferred wide authority to the Indian Government. It is in this spirit that we intend to administer the act and during the war to do our utmost to remove the divisions that stand in the way of its full achievement. And when the war ends, and ends victoriously as a result of the Empire’s united efforts, we mean to proceed at once to deal with the constitutional difficulties that have emerged in the experience of recent years. Non-co-operation and non-co-operation alone will stop this swift and steady progress. For those of us who have devoted years of our lives to the building of the new constitution, often at some risk to ourselves, for those of us who are thrilled by the antiquity of the Indian civilisation, for those of us who are proud of the common effort that Indians and we have made to give India a unique position in the continent of Asia, another chapter of strife, controversy and non-co-operation would come as a great human tragedy.

Such a breach in the common front would be a repudiation at one of the gravest moments in the world's history of the call to both of us to resist the aggressor, to fight brute force and to build up a new and better order in the world in which we and Indians can go about our lawful vocations without the peril that now walks by day and night in so many parts of this suffering world.

It was not—I quote the Prime Minister's weighty words of October 12—with any vindictive purpose that we embarked on the war but simply in defence of freedom. It is not alone freedom of small nations that is at stake. There is also in jeopardy the peaceful existence of great Britain, the Dominions, India, the rest of the British Empire, France and indeed of all freedom loving nations. Whatever may be the issue of the present struggle, and in whatever way it may be brought to a conclusion, the world will not be the same world that we have known before. Looking to the future we can see deep changes will inevitably leave their mark on every field of men's thought and actions and if humanity is to guide aright the new forces that will be in operation all nations will have their part to play. In this new world India has a great part to play, perhaps in area the greatest of any Asiatic country, a great part also in the British commonwealth of nations, for it will be an outward and visible sign that with us there is no racial discrimination. It has a great part also to play in the world at large, for India should stand out as a model of a League of Nations from which war has for generations been banished and the rule of law and justice firmly set. With this great hope before us, let us once and for all abandon the barren paths of non-co-operation and help each other to win the war and to win peace and in this double victory to take steps towards the fruition of India's hopes.

## THE RESOLUTION ON WAR-CRISIS IN PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES

The following resolution was moved by Premiers in the Provincial Assemblies of Madras, Central Provinces, Bihar, U. P., Bombay, Orissa and North-West Frontier Province:

"This Assembly regrets that the British Government have made India a participant in the war between Great Britain and Germany without the consent of the people of India and have further in complete disregard of Indian opinion passed laws and adopted measures curtailing the powers and activities of the Provincial Governments.

"This Assembly recommends to the Government to convey to the Government of India and through them to the British Government that in consonance with the avowed aims of the present war, it is essential in order to secure the co-operation of the Indian people that the principle of democracy with effective safe-guards for the Muslim and other minorities be applied to India and her policy be guided by her people; and that India should be regarded as an independent nation entitled to frame her own constitution and further that suitable action should be taken in so far as it is possible in the immediate present to give effect to that principle in regard to present governance of India.

"This Assembly regrets that the situation in India has not been rightly understood by his Majesty's Government when authorising the statement that has been made on their behalf in regard to India, and in view of this failure of the British Government to meet India's demand this Assembly is of opinion that the Government cannot associate itself with British policy."

The resolution was passed by large majorities in the seven provinces. In U. P. and C. P. Assemblies it was passed with slight amendments which were accepted by the Congress party.

## STATEMENTS ON SIR HOARE'S DECLARATION

## (1) MAHATMA GANDHI

*October 27, 1939*

I have read Sir Samuel Hoare's speech with the attention it deserves. I appreciate the conciliatory tone behind it. It makes it, therefore, embarrassing for me to produce what may appear to be a jarring note. But even as he speaks from a sense of duty I hope I shall receive the same credit. Has Dominion Status for India any meaning unless it is synonymous with independence? Has the India of his imagination the right to secede from the Commonwealth? I like the declaration that the British have shed imperialistic ambition. Will he allow the people of India to judge for themselves whether in reality that ambition has been shed? If it is, the proof of it should be forthcoming even before India is statutorily declared independent.

When the protection of minorities is pleaded against the declaration required by the Congress, the great pronouncement made by Sir Samuel Hoare sounds unreal. What the Congress has asked is not any sounding of Indian opinion but a declaration of Britain's intention. I have endeavoured to show that there is no such thing as real minorities in India whose rights can be endangered by India becoming independent. With the exception of the Depressed Classes there is no minority which is not able to take care of itself. I observe that Sir Samuel Hoare has mentioned the Europeans also as a minority. The very mention of Europeans, in my opinion, condemns the cry of the interest of minorities. But the protection of minorities, whatever they are, is common cause between the British Government and the Congress. I would like the British Government to remember that there is every prospect of Congress India, to use Sir Samuel's phrase, being a hopeless minority. I like Sir Samuel's division of India into Congress and non-Congress. And if non-Congress India contains not merely the Princes but the people of Princes' India, all the Mussalmans, all those

who might be represented by the Hindu Mahasabha and others who refuse to be classified as part of Congress India, it is Congress India which will be in danger of a non-Congress majority. And the Congress has got to make good its position even though it may represent a minority wholly unarmed, partly by outside force but largely by its own will.

I am glad that Sir Samuel Hoare has declared that the present British policy is to be judged in the moral scales suggested by me. I venture to suggest that if Sir Samuel's speech is the last word on behalf of the British Government, British political morality will be found wanting. Sir Samuel has laughed at non-cooperation as a barren doctrine. I am convinced that it is not as barren as he thinks. It has proved its worth in the eyes of millions of Indians and will do so again if the Congress remains truly non-violent, as I hope it will. The Congress decision is an imperative call of duty. It puts both the Congress and the British Government on their trial. Nothing but good will come out of it if both will play the game.

## (2) CONGRESS PRESIDENT

Interviewed on the House of Commons debate on India, Babu Rajendra Prasad, the Congress President said:

Mahatma Gandhi's statement represents my reaction to Sir Samuel Hoare's speech in the House of Commons and it is hardly necessary for me to say much more. Because we were in doubt whether the freedom and democracy we were asked to help in securing for other countries were intended for us also, we wanted a clear declaration of the British aims and application of them. We have been told in effect that we cannot be promised that freedom and democracy, because we have our own internal differences. The problem of the protection of minorities has been brought out as a difficulty in the way of India's advance to freedom. I do not ignore or minimise it. But may I ask when has the British Government offered to Indians that it will accept a constitution which Indians, including, of course, the minorities will frame for themselves.

Let the British Government throw on Indians the responsibility of producing an agreed constitution without any

interference from outside and promise to give statutory effect to it when produced. That will be a genuine offer. Without it, all talk of protection of minorities looks like an excuse for perpetuating the 'status quo.' The mention of Europeans as a minority recalls the discussions for safeguarding British interests. Indians should not be blamed if they regard the plea in favour of minorities as a screen for protecting British interests.

The Congress insists on a charter of independence to be framed by a constituent assembly of representatives selected on universal franchise. But those who are prepared to accept dominion status may well ask—is dominion status of 1926 mentioned by Sir Samuel Hoare the same or something different from what is provided by the Statute of Westminster? Why has he fought shy of mentioning the Statute of Westminster?

Behind all the conciliatory words of Sir Samuel Hoare, there is clear intention not to give full responsible government—not to speak of independence—to India even at the end of the war. Let the British Government realise that India is not to be satisfied by a promise of gradual advance by stages. She wants full freedom and the right to frame her own constitution.

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## THE NEXT STEP

By M. K. GANDHI

*October 30, 1939*

I have never felt the weight of responsibility as heavily as I do today in connection with the present impasse with the British Government. The resignation of Congress ministries was a necessity. But the next step is by no means clear. Congressmen seem to be expecting a big move. Some correspondents tell me, if I only give the call, there will be an India-wide response such as has never been made before. And they assure me that the people will remain non-violent. Beyond their assurance I have no other proof

in support of their statement. I have proof in my own possession to the contrary. These columns have contained some of that proof. I cannot identify myself with any civil disobedience unless I am convinced that Congressmen believe in non-violence with all its implications and will follow implicitly the instructions issued from time to time.

Apart from the uncertainty of the observance of non-violence in Congress ranks is the tremendous fact that the Muslim League looks upon the Congress as the enemy of the Muslims. This makes it well-nigh impossible for the Congress to organise successful non-violent revolution through civil disobedience. It will certainly mean Hindu-Muslim riots. Non-violent technique, therefore, demands the reduction of civil disobedience to the lowest term consistent with national self-respect. The offensive will have to be taken by the British Government. In a situation so delicate and unexampled no individual Congressman or even Congress Committee can be allowed to take the law into their own hands. The Working Committee should alone have the right to declare and regulate civil disobedience.

I have undertaken to guide the Working Committee, but my limitation appal me. My physical condition makes it impossible for me to move about as I used to before. I am therefore cut off from all outward contact with the masses. Even the present Congress workers I do not know personally. I never meet them. My correspondence has to be restricted as much as possible. Therefore, unless Congressmen almost instinctively perceive the duty and the necessity of the preliminary inaction I am prescribing, my guidance will be not only useless but it will be harmful. It will create confusion.

I hold the opinion strongly that whilst by their own action the British Government have made it impossible for the Congress to co-operate with them in the prosecution of the war, the Congress must not embarrass them in its prosecution. I do not desire anarchy in the country. Independence will never come through it. I do not wish for the defeat of the British or, for that matter, of the Germans. The peoples of Europe have been helplessly drawn into the war. But they will soon be awakened from their torpor. This war will not be a war to the finish unless the whole of modern civilisation is to perish. Be that as it may, holding the views I do, I am



in no hurry to precipitate civil disobedience. My prescription to Congressmen, for the time being, is to consolidate the organisation by purging it of all weaknesses. I swear by the old constructive programme of communal unity, removal of untouchability, and the charkha. It is quite clear that non-violence is impossible without the first two. If India's villages are to live and prosper, the charkha must become universal. Rural civilisation is impossible without the charkha and all it implies, i.e., revival of village crafts. Thus the charkha is the symbol *par excellence* of non-violence. And it can occupy the whole of the time of all Congressmen. If it makes no appeal to them, either they have no non-violence in them or I do not know the A. B. C. of non-violence. If my love of the charkha is a weakness in me, it is so radical as to make me unfit as a general. The wheel is bound up with my scheme of Swaraj, indeed with life itself. All India should know my credentials on the eve of what can become the last and decisive battle for Swaraj.

Segaon, 30-10-39.

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### INDIA DEBATE IN HOUSE OF LORDS

#### LORD SAMUEL AND LORD ZETLAND ON THE WAR SITUATION AND INDIA

*November 2, 1939*

In the House of Lords, Lord Samuel after dealing with the war situation and M. Molotov's speech said, I now return to the subject of India on which many must feel grave concern. The matter has been discussed fully in the House of Commons and I trust this House will think it not inappropriate that it should be discussed here also, it being the desire of all to say nothing which will embarrass the Government in the difficult negotiations in which they are engaged. On the contrary, some observations made here may even be of assistance.

Lord Samuel added, it is desirable to emphasise not only

on matters whereon there have been disagreements between the Government of India and His Majesty's Government on the one hand and the Congress party on the other, but also to point out points of agreement which are numerous and important.

In the first place, on the supreme issue of the moment—opposition to Hitlerism—there is complete agreement between Indian opinion and the views in this country.

If India thought that in this war we are wrong on merits and if their sympathies were with our opponents then, indeed, it would be a most grave matter. The contrary is the case. Hitlerism is the very antithesis of Hinduism with its creed of non-violence. The only resemblance is that Hitler is a vegetarian.

But politically, he (Hitler) was highly carnivorous and Indian opinion recognises that and it is unanimous in the detestation of the underlying ideas of the Nazi creed.

On the merits of the great issue before the world India is as whole-heartedly with this country as Australia and New Zealand, and as Canada has been so strikingly shown to be by the elections in Quebec.

It is now agreed in principle that India shall have Dominion Status, and the disagreement is as to when and how. Questions are raised now from the Indian side whether Dominion Status is adequate.

There was general agreement on the principle of federation for India. I journeyed through India for some months last year and found that while in no quarters were the Federal proposals in the Act of 1935 approved in all particulars and were opposed on important points, everybody agreed that some day somehow there should be a federation for India with the Central Government resting on the representation of the people. Mr. Gandhi said to me, and I think said in public, 'Federation, yes, but not this federation.'

So while there is general agreement in principle on this important matter, there is division as to the form and powers to be embodied in the Federal Constitution.

Next, there is agreement between the British Government and the Congress as to the need for carefully provided justice for minority communities. The Congress recognises

that the communal problem is a real problem, not to be brushed aside, but one which requires to be patiently settled.

There is agreement with respect to the Provincial Government. Almost everywhere I found people concurred that the provincial constitutions have been working with success. The British Governors of provinces may not approve all that has been done, but they have no reason to complain of the general attitude of their Ministries. The safe-guards inserted, because of the fear of chaos in the provinces, have never had to be employed and the Viceroy, in the White Paper recently published, pays a warm tribute to the success of provincial Ministries.

On the other hand, the Ministries themselves had no cause to complain of the Governors and I heard when I was there no word from any quarter that there has been any improper interference with the working of the constitutions in the provinces, so that there is over a large sphere broad basis of agreement.

The complaint is made by the Congress that while the British Government agree to Dominion Status in principle, they take no steps to give effect to or implement it in practice. Sir Samuel Hoare has said that pledges had been made time after time that Dominion Status was the aim of the Indian policy. The Viceroy, in the White Paper, says we are working to the end that India may attain her due place amongst the great Dominions and he quotes this statement. 'The natural issue of the Indian progress is the attainment of Dominion Status'. The aim—the issue—is almost something in the future. The last quotation was from a statement made by the present Foreign Secretary, then Lord Irwin, and the date was 1929—ten years ago.

Year after year goes by and this policy which is declared the goal, the end, the aim, is not in fact carried into effect and Indian political leaders see the best years of their lives go by and they are still in the phase of struggle.

I may be permitted to use the familiar quotation, 'man never is but always to be blessed'. It is like some mountain climber who sees what he takes to be the summit before him and when he reaches the top of the ridge after much effort sees that the summit lies farther beyond, and again when he struggles on to a further ridge the goal is still out of his grasp.

The Government say that if only Indians could agree among themselves on the outstanding questions as between the communities and between the Congress party and the States, at once Dominion Status could be brought into effect. But that in substance means that Moslems are to have veto on the introduction of Dominion Status.

Mohammedan India is not eager for federation. They are rather apprehensive of the possible results of federation and they are not pressing for Dominion Status. It is natural for them to say to the Hindus, 'Unless you can concede all we want, we will refuse an agreement, and if we refuse an agreement the British Government say they will not introduce Dominion Status'.

Consequently the present policy of His Majesty's Government leads to the conclusion that the final decision is left with the Moslems, that would mean one-fourth of the population of India is to decide the future of India rather than three-fourth. Such a situation may easily become a permanent deadlock and it is not surprising that the Congress suspects that that is the intention.

All of us in this House, I think, understand the Moslem position and sympathise with that. Undoubtedly Great Britain has duties toward Moslems of India. We cannot wash our hands of the question and say that their future is no concern of ours. And it is the case that friction is serious between Hindu and Moslem communities. When I was there last year I was told by almost everyone that in most places friction was worse in recent years between Moslems and Hindus than earlier. That is not so everywhere. In great states like Hyderabad and Mysore the question is quiescent, thanks mainly to the wise policy of the Princes and their able ministers, but over greater part of India it is almost chronic sometimes acute and dangerous.

The minorities must be protected in their rights and if the minorities have rights, so also have the majorities. It is the fundamental problem of democracy in countries of mixed population how to reconcile the principle of Government by majority vote with securing liberties of minority communities.

In a country which is homogeneous or substantially so like Britain or France or which has become homo-

geneous like the United States, the question does not arise; but in those, where there are several different races or religions or communities within the same geographical area as in many States of Eastern Europe, like Palestine or India, then there is a great problem which prevents democratic institutions from working at all. You have conflict of two principles; has the majority the right to decide on main issues? It has, we believe, in a democracy. On the other hand, have the members of the minority communities right to be protected? They have. But if the two principles clash what then?

There is in India the further complication of States. The Princes have their treaty rights and it is obviously a sound principle of Government that treaties must be respected.

But if the Princes have treaty rights their peoples have moral rights and we cannot say that the eighteenth or early nineteenth century treaties are to be allowed to block for all time the development of modern institutions, and I do not think that the Princes themselves would claim it.

There, in relation to the Princes' rights, people rights, majority rights and minority rights, we must reach a conclusion that both sets of rights must be respected. How the two can be reconciled is the task of resourceful statesmanship.

It appears to me that recently His Majesty's Government here and in India have not shown sufficient zeal and energy in tackling these difficult problems. They have been rather too much content to let matters drift. I believe the present Viceroy himself, as far as Federation is concerned, is most eager and has been most eager to secure a solution and devoted himself with much persistency to achieving that.

He recognises that in order to achieve Dominion Status and Federation it is necessary to solve the problem of minorities. He has been engaged in long and difficult negotiations.

The outbreak of the war has been held necessarily to postpone these negotiations. I rather suspect that the postponement owing to war brought a sigh of relief from many breasts in New Delhi and perhaps Whitehall at the unexpected and welcome respite.

All these inter-locked problems—minorities, Federation and Dominion Status—ought not to be postponed and the

Congress is right in urging that the questions be taken in hand now.

It has been assumed in many quarters that the outbreak of the war made it impossible even to conceive of these matters being pressed, but I do not see why statesmen who would be engaged in dealing with these Indian constitutional problems, are not those who would be engaged in active prosecution of war measures. It might well be that a group might be considering these questions in India or here, while others devote their energies entirely to war.

During the last War the House will remember several of our most embittered and difficult problems were settled while the War was proceeding, and it would be immense proof of the strength and governing ability, if while with one hand we were conducting a great war, with the other we were dealing with difficult material problems in some parts of the Empire.

I was glad to notice in the debate in the other House that several speakers thought that after all some of these questions must be considered in the immediate future. I notice that Mr. Wedgwood Benn took that view and Sir Samuel Hoare and the Under-Secretary did not dissent from that. I regret that the White Paper suggests a different course. The Viceroy there has proposed that the only step to be taken during the war was the establishment of a Consultative Group, the membership of which he outlined and this group, to quote the words of the White Paper 'would have as its objects the association of public interests in India with the conduct of war and with questions relating to war activities.'

It appears to me impossible to draw the line and say that all consideration of constitutional issues would be 'ultra vires.' The National Congress members say with emphasis that they are not prepared to discuss what should be the war measures to be taken by India unless they know what share India should have in determining what those war measures shall be. I trust that it will be possible for Lord Zetland to give us some guidance on that aspect.

The White Paper does embody one definite advance. Contrary to what has been said hitherto, it agrees that any

Agreement of the 1935 Act in respect of Federation should be contemplated before Federation is brought into effect. That is a considerable step to meet Indian opinion. I trust that the second step will be taken, namely, that all these matters shall not be postponed until after the war but dealt with now.

I trust the House will not be deterred from approving an action of that kind by the use by Mr. Gandhi and members of the Congress of the word 'Independence' as defining their true object. Mr. Gandhi has explained to me and others that by 'Independence' he does not necessarily mean separation from the Empire, but means that the Indian people should have the right to determine in freedom for themselves what should be the future of their own country. Many of us think that if they conceded that right they will unquestionably agree to continue the membership of the British Commonwealth on the same footing as the present Dominions.

I cannot suppose that Mr. Gandhi or his colleagues would suggest that in these discussions representatives of Great Britain should take no part. It appears to me essential that we should take part, first, because we have obligations to the Moslems and the Princes, from which we cannot in honour withdraw; secondly, because the future defence of India must rest in a great degree with the British Commonwealth. I cannot imagine that India in the near future would wish to undertake the immense cost for providing herself with adequate defences apart from the British Empire.

If she did not do so, she would run the risk of the same fate at the hands of one or more of her aggressive neighbours as has befallen China. If Britain took part in the discussions then the two sides are not very far apart. The Viceroy in the White Paper statement said, 'I am authorised by His Majesty's Government to say that at the end of the war they will be very willing to enter into consultation with representatives of various communities, parties and interests in India and with the Indian Princes with a view to securing their aid and co-operation in framing all such modifications of the 1935 Act as may seem desirable'.

That is not very far removed from the Constituent

Assembly which the Congress pleaded for. It appears to me that the difference between the two might be reached with no very great difficulty. If a meeting took place in India and if it were fully representative of the Indian people with the present Indian Government, it is quite unlike a Constituent Assembly, which the Congress desired.

I venture to make one suggestion not, of course expecting any immediate or early reply and that is whether the time has not come in connection with these changes that there should now be established a Privy Council in India. If a body modelled on our Privy Council, which is not sufficiently used here, were to be established in India containing leaders belonging to different sections and men not only in Ministerial office, but out of it, it might be easier to secure adequate discussion on matters of interest to different communities.

Further, it appears to me quite essential that when discussions take place at the end of the war on the terms of peace and arrangements to be made subsequently and when the Dominions, as they certainly will be, are brought into consultation, India should be brought into consultation on equal terms.

Even if on that date Dominion Status has not been enacted by statute, still that step might be taken. It would be quite in accordance with the British ideas if such a measure were adopted in practice before it has been recognised in law.

Further more I would urge upon the Government that they should breathe through their declaration of policy a conception of the new position in India and the future, which is not far distant for her.

After all we sometimes do not remember that of every ten inhabitants in the British Empire seven are Indians. I do not see in the language of this White Paper and in the methods of consultation proposed the new spirit in relation to India, which the time requires.

Let me say finally, I am bound to express the view that the action of the Congress in calling upon the Provincial Ministries to resign was wrong. It appears to be an error of political judgment. Although I am in general agreement with most of the underlying aims of the Congress, I think tactically they have been in error. Anyone,



who visited the provinces as I did last year and saw the constitutions at work must feel profound satisfaction at their success. Controversies there have been of course and the Government by their vigorous action have aroused opposition here and there but they have already achieved a great body of beneficial legislation such as no bureaucratic administration could have accomplished and the Viceroy has paid a warm tribute to their work in the White Paper.

That work is too important to be interrupted and thrown into confusion on account of political issues having nothing to do with the Provincial Governments, and more mature political experience would have allowed the Congress Working Committee to realise that this was mistaken method.

Lord Samuel compared the action, which had been taken to the action sometimes taken in the early history of trade unions or the gestures sometimes adopted in the continental Parliaments.

It is wrong, at any time, but in India at the present moment it is doubly wrong when the British Empire is engaged in a life and death struggle for a supreme purpose with which India is in whole-hearted sympathy. They were wrong to take such action, which cannot fail to weaken in some degree the moral position of Great Britain and therefore hamper the conduct of war.

I trust they will not persist in that policy, but that the provincial Governments in the provinces where the Congress has a majority will, after no long interval, return to office and resume their indispensable work. I hope the Government will make it as easy as possible to arrive at an accommodation, and so take a further step forward towards the aims that we shall not merely maintain in India an Imperialistic rule over reluctant subjects, but succeed in enlisting the co-operation of a proud and self-respecting nation.

#### REPLY OF LORD ZETLAND

Lord Zetland said that the Secretary of State for India, in these days, was always apt to find himself in the unhappy position of being between the hammer on the left and anvil on the right.

I know quite well that the noble Marquess (Salisbury)

has doubted the wisdom of the Act of 1935. He had always held perfectly sincere doubts as to the workability of the Act. We all respect the sincerity of his beliefs. I disagreed with him in the early days on that matter. I disagree with him still. I am bound to say that on the whole the provisions of the Act under which the Ministries were set up in the provinces in British India have been fully justified, even by the short experience of three years, we have had of their working. Lord Samuel spoke about Federation. He has told us that in the course of his tour in India he had found on all sides there was agreement that the solution of the Central Government of India must be federal in character. I think he has told us that there were objections raised by different parties concerned to the particular form of Federation or some part thereof in the Act of 1935. Very well, he agrees that Federation is the necessary form of Government for the Centre, but then Lord Samuel said, 'you have promised India Dominion Status. It is always coming, but has never come.' 'But what,' he asked. 'Have you done to give effect to your intention?' I rather gather from the speech of Lord Samuel that he thought we could bring Federation and Dominion Status into effect to-morrow, if only we had the will to do so.

The noble Lord spoke of the pledge given by the Foreign Secretary and said that the natural issue for India was the attainment of Dominion Status. But his comment was that that was in 1929. Does he suggest that a Federation could be formed before the units have come into existence? Surely, the purpose of one part of the Act of 1935 was to create units, which would subsequently be federated. The noble Lord may say that we took a long time in drawing up the provisions of the Act of 1935. We did, but if he had been a member, not only of the Joint Select Committee, but those series of Round Table Conferences with Indians themselves, which preceded the drafting of the Act and the work of the Joint Select Committee, he would realise little more clearly than he does to-day of the extraordinary difficulties and the complexity of the problem we have to try and solve.

He made a reference to the Viceroy's statement and said that the promise contained therein that at the end of the war he would take into consultation leaders of various com-

munities and parties interested with a view to effecting such modifications of the federal provisions as might seem desirable was all to the good. But, he said very little of what we are proposing to do pending the end of the war.

I cannot agree with him if he thinks you can redraft the federal provisions of the Act with a view to bringing Federation into existence, while we are all burdened with the task of carrying on a life and death struggle. But we do agree that it is natural that leaders of Indian public opinion should be associated in some way with the Central Government during the progress of the war and it was with a view to bringing them into close association with the Central Government that we proposed a consultative body.

That was a perfectly sincere and genuine attempt to associate leaders of Indian political parties with the Central Government with the conduct of the war. I remember observing to the house that, in my opinion, it would have three different advantages. Firstly, it would have enabled the Governor-General to communicate to leaders of political parties confidential information. Secondly, it would have enabled them to express opinions frankly to the Governor-General on their views of the measures the Government are proposing to take and since the whole idea was conceived on the assumption that there would be goodwill of both sides with the Governor-General and that members would have collaborated for common purpose and, as it is perfectly well-known, all of them have at heart the successful prosecution of war, I regarded it as axiomatic that the Viceroy would have attached the utmost worth to the views expressed by such body in such circumstances. The third advantage, I said, it would have as that, since the representatives of different communities would be working in close association not only with the Governor-General but with one another it would tend to lessen the differences whereby they are at present divided and would bring to the surface such measure of common ground as would justify us inviting them to become associated with the Government in even more responsible position. I regret profoundly that the proposal does not appear to have been received in India in the spirit wherein it was given.

Meanwhile, these communal differences persist. I need

not lay stress upon them. They are known to your Lordships. The manifesto of the All-India Moslem League as well as the manifesto of the Congress are in the White Paper and since then the leader of the All-India Moslem League has issued a statement, which appeared in the "Manchester Guardian" only two or three days ago.

I do not want to underline the differences, but they cannot be ignored. You have to try somehow or other to reconcile them. What in these circumstances is the path of wisdom? Surely the path of wisdom in these circumstances is to invite leaders in the first instance of two main communities—Hindus as represented by the Congress, Moslems as represented by the All-India Moslem League—to meet under the auspices of a neutral and discuss their differences frankly and see whether they cannot find some solution thereto. That is precisely what the Viceroy is doing at the present moment. He has invited leaders of the Congress and the All-India Moslem League to meet him for that very purpose and I have no hesitation in saying that if as a result of these discussions and consultations we can find a common ground on which the two great communities will work together then the main obstacle in the way of associating leaders of political parties in the actual executive at the centre will have been removed.

I need hardly say I share the regret expressed by Lord Samuel at the action taken by the Congress Ministries in the provinces. I agree with him that it has been a most unfortunate move and I believe that history will prove that it has been most unwise. But there it is, with it seems to me an undue haste; while discussions are still proceeding, the Ministries in four of the provinces have already tendered resignations and the resignation of the Ministry in a fifth province is expected in the very near future. That will mean that the Government will be obliged to proclaim the breakdown of the constitution as far as the provinces are concerned and to take into its own hands the administration.

There is one comment I would make on what Lord Samuel said with regard to this communal difficulty.

He (Lord Samuel) admitted that in British India communal feeling had certainly not decreased in recent times, but he is apparently under the impression that the problem

does not exist in Indian States.

Lord Samuel dissenting said that he was not generalising.

But Lord Samuel was singularly unfortunate in selecting Hyderabad as example, because throughout the last summer the communal question has presented a profound problem. It was a Hindu movement against the Moslem Government and for months bands of Hindus had been proceeding from other parts of India into Hyderabad itself in order to carry on a campaign of civil disobedience.

The communal problem is not confined to British India, nor is it true to say it has not become accentuated in, at any rate, some of the Indian States during the past two or three years.

Let me only say this in conclusion with regard to our war aims in India. It is sometimes said still in India that we are fighting to maintain Imperialism in that country. If by British Imperialism is meant domination and exploitation of one people by another people, I say that if it ever existed, it was abandoned by Parliament, when it accepted the Preamble to the Act of 1919 and every step, which has been taken since that time, has emphasised and ratified the determination of the people of this country to work for self-government of India.

I cannot conceive of anyone, who wished to maintain Imperialism in India in the sense wherein I have described, having voted for the Act of 1935, which was passed by a large majority by the Houses of Lords and Commons. No, our intentions remain what they have been ever since the Act of 1919. We are striving our best with all sincerity to assist in removing obstacles, which at present lie in the path of full fulfilment of the promises which have been made and while I appreciate both, the difficulties of the noble Marquess (Salisbury) in going with me as far as that and I appreciate the idealism of Lord Samuel, who wishes to see a great quickening-up of the procession with which we are engaged I still find from all my practical experience that has come to me as the Secretary of State every day of the year for the past four or five years that it is no use ignoring difficulties in our path. What you may do is to work patiently and in all sincerity to remove them.

## FULL TEXT OF STATEMENT AND CORRESPONDENCE

*November 5, 1939*

His Excellency the Viceroy issued the following statement releasing his correspondence with the Indian Leaders.

War was declared on the 3rd September. In a broadcast that night I appealed to all parties and all sections in India to co-operate in its prosecution. On the following day I saw Mr. Gandhi in Simla, and discussed the whole position freely with him. I similarly took immediate steps to see Mr. Jinnah as representing the Muslim League. Nor did I fail to see the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes.

Thereafter the general question came for consideration before the Congress Working Committee and the Working Committee of the Muslim League. The Working Committee of the Congress met on the 15th of September. They condemned Nazi aggression in decisive terms. But they postponed a final decision so as to allow for the full elucidation of the issues at stake, the real objectives aimed at, and the position of India in the present and in the future, and they invited the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what were their war aims and how those aims would apply to India, and be given effect to in the present. Mr. Gandhi, expressing his full agreement with the Working Committee's statement, remarked that he had been sorry to find himself alone in seeking that whatever support was to be given to the British should be given unconditionally.

The Working Committee of the Muslim League on the 18th September similarly asked, "if full, effective, and honourable co-operation of the Mussulmans is desired," that "a sense of security and satisfaction" should be created amongst Muslims, and referred in particular to the position of the Muslims in Congress provinces, and to the necessity for consulting the Muslims fully regarding any change in the existing constitution and securing their consent and approval.

I now again got in touch with Mr. Gandhi, Mr. Jinnah and the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes. I decided

that, given the great divergence of view which clearly existed between the two major political parties in British India, I must satisfy myself as to the trend of feeling in the country. In pursuance of that object I interviewed over 50 people, representing all parties, communities, and interests. While those conversations were proceeding, the All-India Congress Committee, on the 10th of October, passed a resolution repeating the demand of the Working Committee for a statement by His Majesty's Government of their war aims and peace aims. They demanded also that India should be declared an independent nation and that present application of this status should be given to the largest possible extent.

I reported my conversations in detail to His Majesty's Government who at a time of overwhelming pressure have been devoting the closest attention to the problems of India. It was in the light of profound consideration and long discussion that on the 18th October I made a declaration on behalf of His Majesty's Government. That declaration emphasized first that Dominion Status remained the goal for India; second, that His Majesty's Government were prepared to reconsider the scheme of the present Act at the end of the war in consultation with leaders of opinion in India; third, that His Majesty's Government attached importance to associating public opinion in India with the prosecution of the war, and that for that purpose they contemplated the formation of a Consultative Group the details of which were to be settled after I had further consulted with party leaders.

The announcements in my statement are of great importance. Their importance has been belittled, but they represent points of real substance. The debates in Parliament which followed the publication of my statement brought out another important point—the readiness of His Majesty's Government, if certain conditions were secured, to associate Indian opinion in a still closer and more responsible manner with the conduct of the war by a temporary expansion of the Governor-General's Executive Council. But the reception in British India both of my declaration and of the subsequent debates in Parliament was, so far as the Congress was concerned, definitely hostile. The Congress Working Committee on the 22nd of October passed a resolution to the effect that my declaration was entirely unsatisfac-

tory, and called upon the Congress Ministries in the Provinces to resign. The Muslim League on the same day asked that certain doubts should be removed, and complete clarification of the declarations secured, subject to which they, empowered their president, if fully satisfied, "to give an assurance of co-operation and support on behalf of the Mussulmans of India to the British Government for the purpose of prosecution of the war."

I next invited Mr. Gandhi, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, and Mr. Jinnah to come to see me on November 1, and we discussed the whole position with them frankly. I had already in my previous conversations discussed with them, as with almost all my visitors, from various aspects the possibility of an expansion of the Governor-General's Council. I now told them that if in regard to association at the centre, we had been unable to go further than the Consultative Group it was because of the lack of prior agreement between the major communities such as would contribute to harmonious working in the centre. I added that the manifestoes issued on 22nd October by the Congress Working Committee and the Muslim League had shown only too clearly the gulf that existed between the attitude of these two great parties.

I begged my visitors in these circumstances to meet and to have discussions among themselves on the Provincial position, with a view thereafter to putting forward in agreement proposals which could be considered for some expansion of the Governor-General's Council at the Centre. I told them that I saw no necessity for every detail of the differences between them in the Provinces to be resolved. What was needed was a sufficient resolution of those differences to make the devising of scheme for harmonious co-operation at the Centre practicable. I begged them in the most earnest manner to spare no endeavour to reach agreement; and I emphasised that this was essentially a question affecting Indians on which agreement between Indians themselves was what I was anxious to secure. I repeated the profound anxiety not only of myself but of His Majesty's Government to leave nothing undone which would contribute to achieve that agreement.

The discussions which I suggested have taken place. But the result to me has been a profound disappointment. There



remains to-day entire disagreement between the representatives of the major parties on fundamental issues. All I will say now is that I am not prepared to accept this failure. I propose in due course to try again, in consultation with the leaders of these great parties and the Princes, to see if even now there may still be the possibility of securing unity. During all the time I have been in India there is nothing I have been more anxious to secure than unity, and unity matters far more to India than is perhaps always realised. Unity, too, means that Indians, whatever their community or whatever their party allegiance, and whether they dwell in British India or in the Indian States, must work together in a common scheme. It is worth a great deal to try to bring that about. I may have been unsuccessful so far but I will try again. And when I try again I would ask India to remember my difficulties, and give me credit for an earnest goodwill and an earnest desire to assist. We are dealing with a problem that has defeated the united endeavours of the greatest organisations in this country. There are grave differences of view which have to be taken into account, which should be bridged. There are strong and deeply-rooted interests which are entitled to the fullest consideration and whose attitude is not a thing lightly to be brushed aside. There are minorities which are great in numbers as well as great in historic importance, and in culture. Those are all factors to which full weight has to be given. But complex as the problems are, I refuse to regard them as insoluble, and I prefer to believe that, like other human problems, they will yield to patient discussion in a spirit of goodwill. In this belief I am encouraged by the friendly feeling which has pervaded my discussions with the leaders of parties. I would ask the country, and I would ask the leaders of the great political parties and their constituents, who I know have faith in those leaders, and are ably led by them, to give me the help which I so much need if there is to be any hope of overcoming our difficulties and reaching the result which I am sure that we all of us desire.

Following correspondence passed between the Congress President and H. E. the Viceroy:—

## H. E. THE VICEROY'S LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT AND GANDHIJI

*New Delhi, November 2, 1939*

You will remember that I agreed during our conversation yesterday to let you have in concrete form the proposition which I put to you and the other gentlemen who were present at the meeting, emphasising that I did so with a genuine desire to help, a desire fully shared by His Majesty's Government.

The proposition which I invited you and the other gentlemen present to consider as leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League, was that, given the great importance of ensuring harmonious working at the centre, you should enter upon discussions between yourselves with a view to discovering whether you could reach a basis of agreement between yourselves in the provincial field, consequent on which you could let me have proposals which would result in representatives of your two organisations immediately participating in the Central Government as members of my Executive Council. I brought out, too, that in my judgment it ought not to be necessary absolutely to resolve every detail of such differences as may exist in the provinces. What was required, as was remarked in the course of the discussion, was a degree of agreement in respect of the provinces, such as to make it possible for my visitors and the organisations which they represented to put forward a scheme which could be considered for the centre.

I added, in regard to any arrangement at the centre:— Firstly, that one would hope that it might be found practicable to include also one or possibly more representatives of other important groups, and that that was a question on which I should value your advice when we came to grapple with details. Secondly, that the arrangement which I invited you to consider for the centre would be an ad hoc arrangement for the period of war and would be quite distinct from the much wider question of constitutional reform at the end of the war. And I mentioned that on the last point my declaration had set out the position of His Majesty's Government. I attach a copy of extracts from that declaration.

ration, which I brought to the notice of the meeting yesterday. Thirdly, that the position of anyone appointed to my Executive Council as a member of a political party would be identical in privileges and in obligations with that of the existing members of my Council. Fourthly, that the arrangement would be within the general scheme of the existing law. It would admittedly be inevitably a makeshift arrangement for the duration of the campaign.

I brought out that what was required now, if we could get a workable scheme together, was to put it into operation with as little delay as possible, pending the more general review of the whole constitutional position, which His Majesty's Government have expressed their readiness to undertake after the conclusion of the hostilities.

I think the above makes the position clear. Let me in conclusion repeat that, as I said yesterday, I am at any time at your disposal or that of the other gentlemen who attended our meeting, whether jointly or singly, to give any assistance in my power in reaching conclusions on these most important matters. I feel certain, as I said yesterday, that the suggestions I have put to you, reflecting as they do a very real and substantial evidence of the anxiety of His Majesty's Government to reach a complete understanding, will receive full and sympathetic consideration from you.

*Extracts from Viceroy's Declaration: His Excellency the Viceroy attached the following to his letter to the leaders:—*

I stated in the declaration of October 18, 1939: His Majesty's Government recognise that when the time comes to resume consideration of the plan for the future federal Government of India and of the plan destined to give effect to the assurances given in Parliament by the late Secretary of State, it will be necessary to reconsider, in the light of the then circumstances, to what extent the details of the plan embodied in the Act of 1935 remain appropriate; and I am authorised now by His Majesty's Government to say that at the end of the war they will be very willing to enter into consultation with the representatives of the several communities, parties and interests in India and with the Indian Princes, with a view to securing their aid and co-operation in framing such modifications as may seem desirable.

I added: I have, in what I have just said, made clear that the intention and the anxiety of His Majesty's Government is, as is stated in the Instrument of Instructions to the Governor-General, to further the partnership between India and the United Kingdom within the empire, to the end that India may attain her due place among the great Dominions. The scheme of government embodied in the Act of 1935 was designed as an essential stage in that process. But I have made clear in what I have just said that His Majesty's Government will, at the end of the war, be prepared to regard the scheme of the Act as open to modification in the light of Indian views. And I would make it clear, too, that it will be their object, as at all times in the past it has been, to spare no pains to further agreement, by any means in their power, in the hope of contributing to ordered and harmonious progress of India towards her goal.

I remarked finally, speaking of the demands of the minorities for an assurance that full weight would be given to their views and interests. It is unthinkable that we should now proceed to plan afresh or modify in any respect any important part of India's future constitution without again taking counsel with those who, have in the recent past, been closely associated in a like task with His Majesty's Government and with Parliament.

## PRESIDENT'S REPLY TO H. E. THE VICEROY

*New Delhi, November 3, 1939*

I thank you for your letter of Nov. 2 embodying in a concrete form the proposition which you placed before us when we saw you on Nov. 1. My colleagues and I have given our earnest consideration to it. We have had also the advantage of full talks with Mr. Jinnah but we find ourselves unable to vary the answer we gave you during the interview. At the outset I would like to say that both Gandhiji and I missed at the interview any reference to the main and moral issue raised by the Congress about the clarification of the war aims without which it is impossible for the Congress to consider any subsidiary proposal. The present crisis has arisen owing to the outbreak of war in

Europe and the action of the British Government in declaring India a belligerent country without the consent of the Indian people. The crisis is entirely political and is not related to the communal issue in India. It raises vital questions in regard to the war aims of the British Government and the position of India in relation to them.

The Congress Working Committee, as you are aware, issued a lengthy statement on September 14 in which they invited the British Government to declare these war aims and, in particular, how these aims were going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present. It was further stated that the Indian people must have the right of self-determination by framing their own constitution through a Constituent Assembly without external interference and should guide their own policy. On October 10 the A. I. C. C. approved of and endorsed this statement and stated that in the declaration to be made by the British Government India must be declared an independent nation and present application should be given to this status at present to the largest possible extent. The committee further added that Indian freedom must be based on democracy, and unity, and the full recognition and protection of the rights of all minorities. Subsequent to this the policy of the British Government was declared in the Viceregal statement, extracts from which you have been good enough to send me. This statement was considered by the Congress Working Committee soon after and the committee expressed their opinion that it was unfortunate and wholly unsatisfactory.

As a consequence of this they felt compelled to declare that they were unable to give any support to Great Britain and to call upon the provincial Government in provinces where the Congress is in a majority to tender their resignations. It is worthy of note that the Viceregal declaration of the British policy met with the disapproval of an overwhelming body of opinion in India even outside the Congress. The subsequent statements made on behalf of the British Government in Parliament had not made any essential difference to the policy outlined in the Viceregal statement and as you have rightly pointed out that that policy is still governed by the extracts from it that you have kindly

sent us.

I am afraid it is quite impossible for us to accept this policy or consider any step to further co-operation unless the policy of the British Government is made clear in a declaration on the lines suggested by the Congress. It has pained us to find the communal questions being dragged in this connection - has clouded the main issue. It has been repeatedly said on behalf of the Congress that it is our earnest desire to settle all points of constitutional controversy by agreement and we propose to continue our efforts to this end. But I would point out that this question does not in any respect come in the way of a declaration of Indian freedom as suggested above.

Such a declaration applies to the whole of India and not to any particular community and the Constituent Assembly which will frame India's constitution will be formed on the widest possible basis of franchise and by agreement in regard to communal representation. We are all agreed that there must be full protection of minority rights and interests and this protection should be by agreement between the parties concerned. The British Government in taking and sharing the burden has, in our opinion, made a settlement of the question much more difficult than it should have been. It should allay all real anxiety on the part of the British Government when the Congress declares that it contemplates no constitution which does not carry with it protection of real minorities to their satisfaction. It seems to us that a clear declaration of the kind suggested is an essential preliminary to any further consideration of the matter. I should like to add that the recent developments in the European war have made it all the more necessary for a clear enunciation of war aims. If a satisfactory declaration is made a discussion of the proposal made by your Excellency will be appropriate and useful and we shall gladly discuss it with you. It is perhaps unnecessary to state that Gandhiji is in full agreement with this letter. We propose to leave tomorrow evening for Wardha unless your Excellency desires otherwise.

## MR. JINNAH'S LETTER TO H. E. THE VICEROY

*November 4, 1939*

With reference to the joint interview which Mr. Gandhi, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, president of the Congress, and myself had with you on November 1, and in reply to your letter dated November 2, I beg to inform you that I understood that the Congress leaders and myself were to consider the proposals of your Excellency's letter, 'the proposition which I invited you and the other gentlemen present to consider as leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League was that, given great importance of ensuring harmonious working at the centre, you should enter upon discussions between yourselves in the provincial field, consequent on which you could let me have proposals which would result in representatives of your two organisations immediately participating in the central Executive Council. I brought out, too, that in my judgment it ought not to be necessary absolutely to resolve every detail of such differences as may exist in the provinces. What was required, as was remarked in the course of the discussion, was a degree of agreement in respect of the provinces, such as would make it possible for my visitors and the organisations which they represented to put forward a scheme which could be considered for the centre'.

I understand that we were to consider your proposals without prejudice to the resolution of the Muslim League of October 22, stating that the declaration of your Excellency on behalf of His Majesty's Government, was not satisfactory and required further clarification and assurances, and also without prejudice to the demand of the Congress for a declaration as adumbrated in the resolution of the A. I. C. C. on October 10, 1939.

In consequence, I met the leaders of the Congress. I was informed by them finally that they had come to the conclusion that they could not discuss any question with regard to matters referred to in your letter of November 2, relating to the provincial field or to the centre, until the British Government had complied with their demand as embodied in the resolution of the A. I. C. C. Hence, these two questions were not further discussed.

## VICEROY'S DECLARATION

The Viceroy broadcast the following statement before releasing the foregoing correspondence:

It is with profound regret that I have to announce that the conversations which, at my instance, had been inaugurated between the representatives of the Congress and the Muslim League have so far not achieved what I have hoped. The country is entitled to know, in a matter of such moment and at a time of such gravity, what was the nature of the proposition which I invited my friends in those two organisations to consider. I shall tomorrow publish correspondence which will make the position perfectly clear. Let me only say that my object has been, in these discussions, to bring together the leaders of the great parties and to endeavour to secure, as a result of personal contact between them, and with what personal assistance I could myself give, that measure of agreement in the provinces which, in their view, would enable them to put forward proposals for a constructive advance at the centre for the period of war, such as would be represented by some expansion of the Governor-General's Executive Council and by the inclusion in it of political leaders.

My declaration of Oct. 18 contemplated a consultative group. It offered an arrangement relatively so limited as that group only because of marked divergences of view between the great communities, divergences the existence of which held out no hope of harmonious working at the centre on the basis of joint membership of my Executive Council at a time when harmonious working was of first importance. Nevertheless, I am persuaded that that group holds out great possibilities for the future—possibilities, I feel sure, greater than are commonly realized.

I need not say that it is a profound disappointment to me, after so much endeavour on the part of His Majesty's Government on the part of those leaders with whom I have conferred and of their friends, as well as on my own part, that we have no more to show and that in so many provinces we should be left with no choice but to use the emergency provisions inserted for that purpose in the Government of India Act. As for those provisions, let me emphasize that they are an expedient and not a sanction. My own strong



feeling in regard to their use I cannot better convey than by a paraphrase of the quotation that appears in Arabic characters upon the great gateway at Fatehpur Sikri. That quotation says, 'Life is a bridge—a bridge that you shall pass over. You shall not build your house upon it.'

Nor, in the wider field, do I purpose to take this disappointment as final, or to abandon the efforts I am making to bring about a friendly adjustment of the differences in this country to the end that we can continue to co-operate over the achievement of our common objectives. Differences and difficulties such as those which now threaten to retard—even reverse—the course of constitutional development in India and the earliest attainment of the common goal will not disappear spontaneously, nor will they be conjured away by any refusal to recognize their existence. They will be resolved only by negotiations, carried out in a spirit of mutual accommodation and trust and with a firm resolve to succeed.

I will say no more than that to-night. But I would ask for patience and for the goodwill of the Indian people and of the great political organisations—their members and their leaders—in the efforts I propose to continue to make.

The difficulties are great. How great they are has been most clearly revealed by the events of the last six weeks. But the attempt to reconcile them is one which it is imperative to make and in which, whether I fail or I succeed, I shall spare no effort to bring about the result which is, I know, at the heart of all of those who care for India and for her future.

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## GANDHIJĪ'S REPLY TO THE "LONDON TIMES" EDITORIAL

### UNFAIR

By M. K. GANDHI

The *London Times* editorial seems to me to be unfair. The minorities question has invariably been brought up when—

ever the question of India's freedom has come to the fore. To represent the Congress and its demand as totalitarian is to misrepresent facts. This misrepresentation is not less serious because it is unconscious. The Congress has deliberately discarded the use of force. It has no military backing or tradition. It has from its inception believed in communal unity. It seeks to represent non-Hindus as well as Hindus. It has had Parsis, Muslims and Christians leading it. It has gone out of its way to placate all communities. It could not do otherwise as its only sanction was constitutional agitation till it forged non-cooperation and civil disobedience as an addition to constitutional agitation and as an effective substitute for violence. Communal differences have been used by the British Government to thwart India's aspiration. That the process is likely to have been unconscious does not make it less mischievous. That the Congress has no desire for loaves and fishes must be crystal clear from wholesale resignations of Congress ministries. The Congress will never be a party to communal quarrels. It will rather stand aside and wander in the wilderness and wait for a better day. Even now the ugly spectacle of playing off the League against the Congress seems to be going on. I had expected that the stupendous European crisis would bring better perception to British statesmen.

The mention of the Princes in this connection is particularly unfair. They owe their existence to the Paramount Power and have no status independent of it. Strange as the assertion may appear, they can do nothing good or big without the consent, tacit or implied, of the Paramount Power. They represent nobody but themselves. To invite the Congress to settle with the Princes is the same as inviting it to settle with the Paramount Power.

*The Times* wants the Congress record of dealings with Muslims and Depressed Classes during the last two years. All that I can say is, 'Let Governors of provinces speak.' That the Muslim League and some Depressed Class leaders complain is nothing strange. Some discontent is inevitable in democracy. The Congress has made a handsome and sporting offer. Let a Constituent Assembly of elected representatives frame a constitution for future government of India subject to safeguards for protection of rights of

minorities to their satisfaction. Will British statesmen play the game?

Segaon, 6-11-39.

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# LORD ZETLAND ON FAILURE OF DELHI TALKS

*November 7, 1939*

In the House of Lords, Lord Snell asked the Government whether they had any statement to make on the position in India as disclosed by the announcement and correspondence published by the Governor-General which appeared in Monday's newspapers.

Lord Zetland replied, "I am grateful for this opportunity to make some observations on this matter and the House will, I hope, forgive me if my answer runs to some little length.

"I need hardly say that His Majesty's Government share the profound regret of the Governor-General at the failure of the consultations which he had been holding during the last week to produce an agreement between representatives of the Congress on the one hand and the All India Muslim League on the other. May I remind the House briefly that the previous discussions which the Governor-General had been so patiently conducting for several weeks past had convinced him that there was little, if any, prospect of securing an agreement on plans which he had been considering with the object of bringing Indians into association with the Central Government of India on the conduct of war unless some accommodation could first be reached on the difficulties felt by Moslems as to their position in the provinces where the Congress Governments were in power.

As the House will have seen from the documents published yesterday that the Congress has definitely refused to consider any concrete plans such as those outlined by the Governor-General, unless His Majesty's Government should be willing first: to make a declaration to the effect that

India is an independent nation and that His Majesty's Government will raise no opposition to her future form of Government being determined without their intervention by a Constituent Assembly called upon the widest possible basis of franchise and by agreement in regard to communal representation. The Congress have further consistently taken the line which they still maintain that the fact there are racial and religious minorities in India is of no relevance in that connection and that it has always been the intention of the Congress to secure through the constitution to be framed by Indians themselves such protection for their rights as may prove acceptable to the minorities.

His Majesty's Government find it impossible to accept this position. The long standing British connection with India has left His Majesty's Government with obligations towards her which it is impossible for them to shed by disinterested themselves wholly in the shaping of her future form of Government. Moreover, one outstanding result of the recent discussions in which the Governor-General has been engaged with representatives of all parties and interests in India has been to establish beyond doubt the fact that a declaration in the sense proposed with the summary abandonment by His Majesty's Government of their position in India would be far from acceptable to large sections of Indian population.

But this does not mean that we had in any sense weakened in our determination to assist India by such means as are in our power to reach without avoidable delay the position to the British Commonwealth of Nations to which we are pledged. Let me take this opportunity for removing some doubts and suspicions which appear to have been felt in India about reference in the recent India debate in the House of Commons by Lord Privy Seal to "Dominion Status of 1926" as being the status we contemplate for India. The suggestion, I understand, has been made that the passage of the Statute of Westminster in 1931 has produced for the dominions to which the Statute applies a status which is somewhat different from and is superior to the relationship described in the Balfour Declaration contained in the report of Imperial Conference of 1936.

This House at all events will have no difficulty in be-

lieving me when I say that there is no foundation for any such suggestion. My Right Honourable friend (Sir Samuel Hoare) referred to Dominion Status of 1926 because it was in that year the Imperial Conference described the status of the dominions and the status so described has not been altered by anything which has since occurred, the statute of Westminster, having merely given legal effect to certain consequences of the constitutional position as was then recognised.

It was our hope that the plans which the Governor-General has indicated, including as they did the incorporation of the leaders of the main political parties in India in the Central Government, if they could have been brought into play, would have done much towards facilitating the removal of the outstanding obstacle at present in India's path. The Governor-General has made it clear that he is not deterred by his present failure in hoping for a reconsideration by the parties interested and His Majesty's Government warmly approve the readiness which he has expressed to be of such service as he can whenever an opportunity occurs.

Meanwhile the position at the moment is that in Bengal, the Punjab and Sind Ministries which in those provinces do not owe allegiance to the Congress party remain in office; in five of the remaining eight provinces where the Congress Governments have been in power, those Governments have now resigned and in the other three provinces the Governments are expected to resign in the very near future. There appears to be in one province—Assam—the possibility of an alternative government, but with this one exception the Governors have found or will very shortly find themselves with no option since alternative Ministries in a position to command the confidence of the legislature are not forthcoming but to assume to themselves by proclamation powers which the provisions in the Act enable them to assume in such a situation.

Let me make it plain that Section 93 of the Act under which this action has been taken is in no sense a penal provision; it simply provides a machinery the possible necessity for which Parliament in its wisdom foresaw if to quote the words of the Act 'a situation has arisen in which the Government of a province cannot be carried on in accordance with

the provisions of this Act for carrying on the King's Government'.

It is our hope that in the absence of opposition from supporters of the Congress or from other quarters, the Governors with the aid of their official adviser and members of the public services will succeed in conducting smoothly and efficiently the administration of the provinces, the difference being—obviously a fundamental difference—that their actions will be decided in responsibility to this House, to this Parliament; and not in pursuance of advice tendered to them by Ministers responsible to the provincial legislature. We greatly regret that the Ministries which have with so much zeal been carrying on the Government of their great provinces and tackling with energy and resource the many problems with which administration has naturally brought them into contact should have found it necessary to withhold their further services from their country, but we refuse to believe that this withdrawal will be for long and we shall continue to hope, so long as any grounds for such hope remain that, proclamations by the Governors need have only a temporary duration, for I can assure the House that the Governors will be only too ready to recall to their counsels responsible advisers as soon as they are available."

Lord Snell said that he was grateful to Lord Zetland for the statement and added "I am sure that the whole House will share the regret he has expressed that the working arrangements in India have for the time being been suspended. My judgment on the situation after listening to the statement is that some keener effort should be made than the statement foreshadows to keep the door open.

"The declaration as made by the Congress appears, as we hear it, somewhat harsh. We do not know what qualifications there may be behind the written word. I hope we shall not accept this failure as inevitable without trying once, twice, three times to patch up whatever difficulties have arisen. The Congress appears to want to settle the matter without reference to outside influence. In that they may merely dislike official influence being exerted in any conference that may be held. It is possible that unofficial advisers who could interpret the mind and hopes of England might not meet with the

same negative response from them.

We cannot in this country compel either agreement or toleration in India but it is quite obvious that the differences that exist there are based upon deep rooted fears or prejudices and we can only encourage every effort made to try to find a solution for the difficulties that have arisen. I believe with Lord Zetland that it would be a tragedy if after the great success which has taken place in Provincial Government, the success which has raised the prestige of India in the world, if because of communal differences the system of Provincial Government should now be suspended. We can only hope a way will be found to enable the parties to continue co-operation in the common service to their country. My last word would be that the statement as I have heard it does not appear to lead to any next step. It rather leaves the situation in the air. I feel that in the circumstances Government might have given a lead by indicating a little more clearly than they have what they propose should be the next. Do they merely propose to sit and wait until things get better or worse or have they any other step to provide the solution which we all hope will be found."

Lord Samuel described Lord Zetland's statement as one of great gravity and "most serious statement we heard in regard to India for many years past. Regrettable at any time it was particularly deplorable in this particular time of war. The methods which have been adopted to meet this present emergency by the Viceroy and Provincial Governors are obviously only methods possible in the circumstances but they can only be interim methods, as Lord Zetland has explained and while they are in force, as he has told us, the responsibility for the Government of India in the provinces must rest with these Houses of Parliament since it no longer rests with the elected representatives of the people of India. No doubt this House and the House of Commons will in due course have to consider very seriously what steps they can take, if they are able to take any steps in order to promote some form of settlement."

Lord Samuel concluded "We can only share the hope expressed by the Secretary of State that the present situation will not last for long. We must sympathise with the deep disappointment of the Viceroy. While it is impossible to-

day after first hearing the statement to enter fully into these matters, I have no doubt the House will desire at no distant date to undertake a further review of the situation."

In the House of Commons Sir Hugh Oneill read a summarised version of Lord Zetland's statement in the House of Lords and Mr. Wedgwood Benn asked "in the first place is it possible by further discussion with the Congress to overcome the difficulty about the scope and constitution of the Constituent Assembly at the end of the war; and secondly, do Government fully realise what a serious and almost impossible responsibility it is to lay upon this House to undertake support or criticism of a Governor who is attempting to carry on in these difficult circumstances the business of his province."

Sir Hugh Oneill replied "I am sure the Viceroy will only be too glad to help whether as regards such an assembly or such conference as the Right Hon'ble gentleman has indicated in any way in which he thinks there is anything like a chance that agreement could be reached in this difficult situation."

Mr. Grahamwhite asked: "Have the Government of India and the Secretary of State had an opportunity of considering the proposals in detail—proposals by the Congress party for the Assembly?"

Sir Hugh Oneill: "No."

Mr. Grahamwhite: "Would it not be possible to ask that these details should be furnished so that they might be considered?"

Sir Hugh Oneill: "I think the position that the Congress leaders have taken up so far is that they do not feel able to enter into any such discussions unless Government will as a preliminary give a declaration in the sense they desire."

Mr. Wedgwood Benn: "Is there really so much difference between the statement of the Congress and the real interpretation of the Act of 1926?"

"Is it not possible by discussion with Congress so to proceed within the ambit of that policy of this House that their desires might be met?"

Sir Hugh Oneill: "I think that Mr. Benn will have gathered from my original reply that the Viceroy is only too anxious to keep the door open to any discussion."



Mr. D.-Grenfell: "Are we to understand from the statement that Government are not deterred by the failure of the negotiations and that Government themselves may assume the initiative in reopening the negotiations on a new basis?"

Sir Hugh O'Neill: "The Viceroy has already said he would be only too glad to discuss the matter with representatives of the Congress and also with the minorities if he can see any chance of an agreement."

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## COMMENTS ON THE VICEREGAL STATEMENT ON DELHI TALKS

### END THE GAME OF SEESAW

By M. K. GANDHI

*November 8, 1939*

I have read with respectful attention His Excellency the Viceroy's broadcast and his introductory remarks on the correspondence between himself and Shri Rajendra Prasad and Jinnah Saheb released by His Excellency. I welcome His Excellency's refusal to accept defeat and his determination to solve what seems to have become insoluble. I share to the fullest extent His Excellency's anxiety to reach a solution. Without, therefore, waiting for the Congress reaction to these two declarations and purely for the sake of assisting the common cause, I would like to suggest that no solution is possible unless an acceptable declaration of war aims about India is forthcoming. The pronouncements hitherto made, whether here or in Great Britain, are after the old style, suspected and discredited by freedom-loving India. If Imperialism is dead, there must be a clear break with the past. Language suited to the new era has to be used. If the time has not yet come for the acceptance of this fundamental truth, I would urge that further effort at reaching a solution should be suspended. In this connection I would remind

British statesmen that what is wanted is a declaration of Britain's intention regarding her Indian policy irrespective of India's wishes. A slave-holder, who has decided to abolish slavery, does not consult his slaves whether they desire freedom or not.

Once a declaration to free India from bondage, not in stages but at once, is made, an interim solution will be found to be easy. Protection of rights of minorities will then become simple. The game of seesaw will cease. The minorities are entitled to protection, not in stages but to the fullest extent and in one single step. No charter of freedom will be worth looking at which does not ensure the same measure of freedom for the minorities as for the majority. The minorities will be full-fledged partners in the framing of the constitution. How that can be attained will depend upon the wisdom of the representatives charged with the sacred duty of preparing the constitution. Britain has hitherto held power—this is inevitable in any system of imperialism—by playing the minorities against the so-called majority and has thus made an agreed solution among the component parts well-nigh impossible. The burden of finding a formula for the protection of minorities should be thrown on the parties themselves. So long as Britain considers it her mission to bear this burden, so long will she continue to feel the necessity of holding India as a dependency. And patriots impatient for deliverance will fight, non-violently if I can guide them and violently if I fail and perish in the attempt. God's curse of war, I had hoped and still hope, would be turned into a blessing by Britain realising that the one thing needful for her to justify and hasten the end of this war was to free a great and ancient country like India from her yoke.

Believing as I do in the Viceroy's sincerity I would urge fellow-workers not to lose patience. There can be no civil resistance so long as, first, the Viceroy is exploring the possibilities of a settlement, secondly, the Muslim League blocks the way, and, thirdly, there is indiscipline and disunity in Congress ranks.

The second condition should not offend Muslim friends. So long as there is no workable arrangement with the Muslim League, civil resistance must involve resistance against the

League. No Congressman can be party to it. I observe that my note in *Harijan* has shocked Jinnah Saheb. I am sorry for it. But at this stage I would not defend myself. I do not want to mar in any way the negotiations between him and Pandit Nehru which I hope will be resumed soon and pray will lead to communal peace.

Since making the above statement I have read the report of the further statement of the Secretary of State in the House of Lords yesterday. It leaves the main position unchanged.

Seгаon, 8-11-39.

## STATEMENT BY THE CONGRESS PRESIDENT

I have read the Viceroy's statement published along with the correspondence that passed between him and Mr. Jinnah and myself. He seems to give an impression that the British Government are unable to comply with our request for a clear declaration of India's status as a free country on account of our differences. The fact is that the British Government is not prepared to promise that it will accept and give legal effect to any constitution which the Indians, including all real minorities would prepare and in which the safeguards for the protection of minorities will be included. We made a public demand for such a promise and I cannot understand what objections the British Government can have to this on the score of our differences with the minorities. If we are unable to produce a constitution satisfactory to all, the British Government will be free from all blame and the responsibility will be entirely of the Indians. The minorities which are really for attaining the freedom of India can have no reasonable objection as the proposed constitution will not be produced without co-operation of all.

The real difficulty is not communal, but political. The British Government are not yet prepared to concede the right of self-determination to India in practice however much it may proclaim it in theory to the world. We put its professions to acid test. Let us have a right to frame our own constitution and we shall do it. We failed in the past in assisting the British Government to frame a constitution for

us. But helping the British Government to frame a constitution for India is something very different from independently framing a constitution for ourselves with certainty that the constitution will be accepted and enforced.

Our regret is that instead of adopting this straight course and throwing the responsibility upon the Indians to frame a constitution with necessary and satisfactory safeguards for the protection of the minorities and thus showing its own bonafides beyond doubt and cavil the British Government befogged the main and moral issue by asking us to settle our differences without telling us at the same time that the result of such a settlement will be a free constitution for the country. It was for this reason that we felt compelled to concentrate on political issues and to refuse to consider the proposal for the expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council before the question of India's status as a free country with full right to self-determination is settled to our satisfaction.

The two principles of organisation of which the Viceroy made reference in his statement, the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League both declared that they aim at the independence for India and so far as I know there is no party or group in India which does not want full powers for India to manage her own affairs by whatever name or expression that freedom may be called or described. There is this fundamental unity in all parties in India and this is a universal urge of all Indians which the Congress embodied in its demand for a clear declaration.

The resolution of the Muslim League is equally clear that it does not accept the Viceroy's announcement and insists upon the clarification of the same and consideration *de novo* of the question of Indian constitution. How then does any communal difference stand in the way of clear recognition and declaration of the status as a free country? Whatever differences there are relate not to India's status but to certain other subsidiary matters which we are prepared to settle ourselves. Our proposed talks with Mr. Jinnah will relate not to this fundamental position, but other subsidiary matters. The Congress has been insisting on, "constructive programme an essential element of which" as Mr. Jinnah recognises "is communal unity". We propose to do our best

to achieve the success of this essential programme, but the fact that we are still engaged in this most urgent work should not stand in the way of a clear declaration of the kind demanded by us. All points of principle and detail for safeguarding the rights of the minorities have to be left out to be settled by Indians themselves, which they will do to the satisfaction of all if once the British Government proves its own bonafides by ceasing to meddle in our domestic affairs.

PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU issued the following statement to the Press:—

The Viceroy's statement issued last night has surprised me as it conveys an entirely different impression of what transpired in Delhi from what I had gathered from contact with some of the principal parties concerned. From his statement it would appear that the question to be considered was a communal one and he adds that "there remains to-day entire disagreement between representatives of the major political parties on fundamental issues."

This seems to me an entire misapprehension of the situation and I am not aware of any such disagreement on fundamental issues. But there is a fundamental disagreement between the Congress and the British Government and it was because of this that the Viceroy's proposals could not be considered by us. The question before us was a political one and as such it was considered by all of us.

It was agreed between Mr. Jinnah and me that the communal question should be discussed fully by us at an early convenient date. This did not affect the Viceroy's proposals so long as the political difficulty was not got over.

Hence it was not discussed in this connection.

The crisis has arisen over a political issue, namely the European war and the declaration of India as a belligerent country. The Congress Working Committee asked for a statement of war aims and how these were going to be applied to India. Subsequently a declaration was made by the British Government, through the Viceroy, and this was considered entirely unsatisfactory. As a result of this, the Congress felt that it could not associate itself with the war and called upon Congress Governments to resign.

These resignations were offered and in some cases have already been accepted. All this had nothing to do with the communal situation.

The Viceroy then suggests that the Congress and the Muslim League should come to an agreement in regard to the provincial field, consequent on which proposals for the centre would be considered. This suggestion, howsoever desirable at any other time, had no application to the present situation as we had voluntarily retired from the provincial field because of disagreement with the British Government on vital matters of policy. Our withdrawal from the provincial Governments was in no way due to communal conflict.

It was surprising therefore that the Viceroy should forget or ignore the basic issue and take our co-operation with Britain for granted subject to minor changes. As Shri Rajendra Prasad has stated in his letter "both Mahatma Gandhi and I missed at the interview any reference to the main and moral issue raised by the Congress about the clarification of war aims without which it was impossible for the Congress to consider any subsidiary proposal."

It must be remembered that this clarification does not affect the communal problem, and the proposal for a Constituent Assembly, as amplified by Shri Rajendra Prasad, in his interview with and letter to the Viceroy, also overcomes any communal objection.

Does the Viceroy imagine that Mr. Jinnah or the Muslim League are opposed to such clarification or the declaration of India as a free country? If so, I fear he is very much mistaken. I found, to my pleasure, that in regard to objectives Mr. Jinnah and I had a great deal in common. He did not entirely agree with our approach to the political problem and so we decided to send separate answers to the Viceroy. Our talks removed many misapprehensions and brought us much nearer to each other than we had been for some years past. I am convinced that such difference as exists politically or communally, can be and will be got over. Even during the last week it was not any differences between Mr. Jinnah and us that came in the way, but the fundamental difference between the British Government and us.

Let there be no mistake about this. No one stands in

the way of an unequivocal declaration of war aims and India's freedom by the British Government except themselves. Till such a satisfactory declaration is made, other issues do not arise, and we cannot associate ourselves in any way with British policy. To drag the communal question in this straight issue is to befog people's minds and divert them into wrong channels.

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## IS CONGRESS A HINDU ORGANISATION?

By M. K. GANDHI

*November 13, 1939*

Evidently we have not heard the last of Lord Zetland's charge that the National Congress is an organisation representing Hindus and therefore national only in name but in reality communal. There cannot be a grosser libel on the Congress than this. From its inception it has been national. Its originator was an Englishman. The late A. O. Hume was long its Secretary. It has always had one or two Muslim Secretaries. It has had Muslim, English, Christian and Parsi Presidents. Dadabhai was, till he became invalided, the soul of the Congress. His was the guiding hand and the directing brain in everything. Sir Pherozeshah Mehta was the uncrowned King of the Bombay Presidency. He was the maker of Presidents both of the Congress and of the Bombay Corporation. Badruddin Tyabji was for years a decisive factor in the deliberations of the Congress. Who does not know that whilst Hakimsaheb Ajmalkhan was alive nothing could be done by the Congress if it had not his *imprimatur*? Dr. Ansari was for years Joint General Secretary. The readers know the influence that the Ali brothers exercised over the Congress during the Khilafat days. Today the Working Committee does not move without Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's co-operation and wise guidance. His is the decisive voice on Hindu-Muslim questions. Through its whole history now running into the second half of a century the

Congress has ever striven to represent the whole of India in a manner no other organisation has done. Every victory scored by the Congress has benefited all communities.

"If such is really the case, why has the Congress usurped the function that belongs to the All India Hindu Mahasabha?" ask some angry correspondents. *The Tribune* has also pointed out what has appeared to the Editor the illogicality of the Congress. The illogicality has to be admitted. But neither life nor institutions are governed by logic. Obviously the Congress felt the necessity of a communal adjustment for the political advancement of the country, and the Congress-League Pact of 1916 was born. Ever since that time the Congress has made communal unity a plank in the Congress programme. Though the function should logically belong to communal organisations, a mass organisation like the Congress cannot look on if communities quarrel and when in the national interest a solution becomes necessary. Thus the Congress could not shirk what came to it as a clear call to duty. The Congress is and should be *the* organisation to take a purely nationalistic and impartial view on communal questions. Whatever may be said to the contrary, I maintain that the Congress embodies the hope and aspirations of India. It can conclude no pact with any person if it does not represent the whole of India in so far as her political aspirations are concerned. Its traditions unfit it to represent Hindus as against Muslims or *vice versa*. It is fit to represent the common interest of all sons of Hindustan. I can see nothing wrong in the Congress trying to arrange pacts with men or their organisations for the furtherance of common interest. Needless to say they must be all mutually helpful, never contradictory. It is a difficult task no doubt. But if people and organisations extend their goodwill to the Congress, the task is not beyond its scope or capacity. It does not inspire that all-round trust today. It may therefore have to wait for that day. If some other organisation does it, Congressmen will welcome it.



## THE MAIN ISSUE

*The following statement was cabled to the News Chronicle,  
by Gandhiji*

*November 14, 1939*

I observe that the main issue between Britain and India is being confused in the British Press. Does Britain intend to recognise India as an independent nation or must India remain Britain's dependency? This question has not been raised by the Congress to gain an advantage over Britain, but to enable the people of India to decide how they should behave during the world crisis. The issue thus becomes purely moral for, owing to her material and military control of India, Britain is able to regulate the Indian and British garrison and drain India's wealth at her will. Eight provinces out of eleven have said in emphatic language that they cannot participate in the war, if it does not mean, among other things, India's complete freedom. All other issues are subordinate. The question of minorities is purely a domestic one for the majority and the minorities to settle themselves. The proposed Constituent Assembly is the only body that can evolve a proper and lasting solution. Any other can only be a make-shift carrying no popular sanction. To fling the minorities question in India's face is to confuse issues. To raise the question of the Princes is still more untenable. They are part of the Paramount Power. It is painful to think that British statesmen do not so much as mention the millions of people of the States. Have they no voice in their own government? Are they to remain serfs, which they are, though they are dragged into the war? No wonder Herr Hitler has challenged the British Government to prove her sincerity by recognising India as a free nation. Whatever may be his intention in issuing the challenge, it cannot be denied that it is pertinent. Anyway, let the British public know that the Congress demand is unequivocal and capable of being satisfied if there is the will to shed imperialism. The Working Committee meets

on the 19th instant at Allahabad to consider the next step. There should be no misunderstanding, therefore, about the issue. If there is to be a fight between Britain and the Congress, the world should know clearly what it is to be for.

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*Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru cabled the following Message to*

*India League, London*

*November 15, 1939*

'India holds fast to-day as before, to democracy, freedom and peace, and condemns all aggression. If the war is for this, then the Governments must state their aims clearly, agree to end Fascism and Imperialism, support self-determination, declare independence for India and act up to these declarations. Then all freedom-loving forces in the world will rally and establish a new order. India cannot support the preservation of Imperialism.'

## 40

## WORKING COMMITTEE'S RESOLUTION AT ALLAHABAD

*November 19-23, 1939*

The Committee discussed the political situation in India created by the war and the resignation of Congress Ministries and passed the following resolution:—

The Working Committee have noted with pleasure the response of the country to the policy enunciated by them in regard to the war crisis in Europe and its repercussions in India. This policy, based on numerous declarations of the Congress, was laid down in the statement issued by the Committee on September 14, 1939, and subsequent events have amply justified its wisdom and expedience. The course of the war and the policy pursued by the British and French

Governments, and, in particular, the declarations made on behalf of the British Government in regard to India, seem to demonstrate that the present war, like the world war of 1914-1918, is being carried on for imperialist ends, and British imperialism is to remain entrenched in India. With such a war and with this policy the Congress cannot associate itself, and it cannot countenance the exploitation of India's resources to this end.

The Working Committee's unequivocal demand was for a declaration of war aims in regard to democracy and imperialism and in particular how these aims were going to be applied to India. These aims could only be considered worthy if they included the elimination of imperialism and the treatment of India as an independent nation whose policy would be guided in accordance with the wishes of her people. The answer to this demand has been entirely unsatisfactory and an attempt has been made on behalf of the British Government to create misunderstandings and to befog the main and moral issue. In justification of this refusal to make a declaration in terms of the Working Committee's resolution, communal pleas have been advanced and the rights of minorities and of the Princes pleaded as a barrier to India's freedom. The Committee wish to declare with all emphasis that no communal considerations arise in meeting the demand of the Congress, and the minorities, whatever their other differences might be, do not oppose India's right to freedom and independence. The Princes are represented by, and are the emblems of, the Paramount Power in India. In the end it will be the people of the Indian States who will determine what part they will take in a free India, though the British Government has consistently ignored their wishes in a matter which vitally affects them. In any event the wishes of those who may oppose India's independence are, and must be irrelevant to the declaration of the British Government's intentions. The Committee can only interpret this attempt to avoid a statement of war aims and Indian freedom, by taking shelter under irrelevant issues, as a desire to maintain imperialist domination in India in alliance with the reactionary elements in the country.

The Congress has looked upon the war crisis and the

problems it raises as essentially a moral issue, and has not sought to profit by it in any spirit of bargaining. The moral and dominant issue of war aims and India's freedom has to be settled satisfactorily before any other subsidiary question can be considered. In no event can the Congress accept the responsibility of government, even in the transitional period, without real power being given to popular representatives. The Working Committee therefore approve of and endorse the reply dated November 4, 1939 sent by the Congress President to the Viceroy.

The Committee wish to declare again that the recognition of India's independence and of the right of her people to frame their constitution through a Constituent Assembly, is essential in order to remove the taint of imperialism from Britain's policy and to enable the Congress to consider further co-operation. They hold that a Constituent Assembly is the only democratic method of determining the constitution of a free country, and no one who believes in democracy and freedom can possibly take exception to it. The Working Committee believe too that the Constituent Assembly alone is the adequate instrument for solving the communal and other difficulties. This however does not mean that the Working Committee will relax their efforts for arriving at a solution of the communal problem. This Assembly can frame a constitution in which the rights of accepted minorities would be protected to their satisfaction, and in the event of some matters relating to minority rights not being mutually agreed to, they can be referred to arbitration. The Constituent Assembly should be elected on the basis of adult suffrage, existing separate electorates being retained for such minorities as desire them. The number of members in the Assembly should reflect their numerical strength.

The declarations made on behalf of the British Government being inadequate have compelled the Congress to dissociate itself from British policy and war effort, and as a first step in non-co-operation, to bring about the resignation of all Congress Governments in the Provinces. That policy of non-co-operation continues and must continue unless the British Government revises its policy and accepts the Congress contention. The Working Committee would, however, remind Congressmen that it is inherent in every form

of Satyagraha that no effort is spared to achieve an honourable settlement with the opponent. While a Satyagrahi is ever ready for a non-violent fight, if it has to come, he never relaxes his effort for peace and always works for its attainment. The Working Committee will, therefore, continue to explore the means of arriving at an honourable settlement, even though the British Government has banged the door in the face of the Congress. The Committee must however resist, by the non-violent methods of the Congress, all attempts to coerce the people of India along paths which are not of their choice and everything that is against the dignity and freedom of India.

The Working Committee appreciate and express pleasure at the readiness exhibited by Congressmen for the launching of Civil Disobedience should this become necessary. But Civil Disobedience requires the same strict discipline as an army organised for armed conflict. The army is helpless unless it possesses its weapons of destruction and knows how to use them. So also an army of non-violent soldiers is ineffective unless it understands and possesses the essentials of non-violence. The Working Committee desire to make it clear that the true test of preparedness for Civil Disobedience lies in Congressmen themselves spinning and promoting the cause of khadi to the exclusion of mill-cloth, and deeming it their duty to establish harmony between communities by personal acts of service to those other than members of their own community, and individual Hindu Congressmen seeking occasion for fraternising with the Harijans as often as possible.

Congress organisations and Congressmen should therefore prepare for future action by promoting this programme. They should explain to the people the message and policy of the Congress and the implications of the Constituent Assembly, which is the crux of the Congress programme for the future.

## THE ONLY WAY

By M. K. GANDHI

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has compelled me to study, among other things, the implications of a Constituent Assembly. When he first introduced it in the Congress resolutions, I reconciled myself to it because of my belief in his superior knowledge of the technicalities of democracy. But I was not free from scepticism. Hard facts have, however, made me a convert and, for that reason perhaps, more enthusiastic than Jawaharlal himself. For I seem to see in it a remedy, which Jawaharlal may not, for our communal and other distempers, besides being a vehicle for mass political and other education.

The more criticism I see of the scheme, the more enamoured I become of it. It will be the surest index to the popular feeling. It will bring out the best and the worst in us. Illiteracy does not worry me. I would plump for unadulterated adult franchise for both men and women, i.e., I would put them all on the register of voters. It is open to them not to exercise it if they do not wish to. I would give separate vote to the Muslims; but, without giving separate vote, I would, though reluctantly, give reservation, if required, to every real minority according to its numerical strength.

Thus the Constituent Assembly provides the easiest method of arriving at a just solution of the communal problem. Today we are unable to say with mathematical precision who represents whom. Though the Congress is admittedly the oldest representative organisation on the widest scale, it is open to political and semi-political organisations to question, as they do question, its overwhelmingly representative character. The Muslim League is undoubtedly the largest organisation representing Muslims, but several Muslim bodies—by no means all insignificant—deny its claim to represent them. But the Constituent Assembly will represent all communities in their exact proportion. Except it there is no other way of doing full justice to rival claims. Without it

there can be no finality to communal and other claims.

Again the Constituent Assembly alone can produce a constitution indigenous to the country and truly and fully representing the will of the people. Undoubtedly such a constitution will not be ideal, but it will be real, however imperfect it may be in the estimation of the theorists or legal luminaries. Self-government to be self-government has merely to reflect the will of the people who are to govern themselves. If they are not prepared for it, they will make a hash of it. I can conceive the possibility of a people fitting themselves for right government through a series of wrong experiments, but I cannot conceive a people governing themselves rightly through a government imposed from without, even as the fabled jackdaw could not walk like a peacock with feathers borrowed from his elegant companion. A diseased person has a prospect of getting well by personal effort. He cannot borrow health from others.

The risks of the experiment are admitted. There is likely to be impersonation. Unscrupulous persons will mislead the illiterate masses into voting for wrong men and women. These risks have to be run, if we are to evolve something true and big. The Constituent Assembly, if it comes into being—as I hope it will—as a result of an honourable settlement between us and the British people, the combined wit of the best men of the two nations will produce an Assembly that will reflect fairly and truly the best mind of India. Therefore the success of the experiment at the present stage of India's history depends upon the intention of the British statesmen to part with power without engaging India in a deadly unorganised rebellion. For I know that India has become impatient. I am painfully conscious of the fact that India is not yet ready for non-violent civil disobedience on a mass scale. If, therefore, I cannot persuade the Congress to await the time when non-violent action is possible, I have no desire to live to see a dog-fight between the two communities. I know for certain that, if I cannot discover a method of non-violent action or inaction to the satisfaction of the Congress and there is no communal adjustment, nothing on earth can prevent an outbreak of violence resulting for the time being in anarchy and red ruin. I hold that it is the duty of all communities and

Englishmen to prevent such a catastrophe.

The only way out is a Constituent Assembly. I have given my own opinion on it, but I am not tied down to the details. When I was nearly through with this article, I got the following wire from Syed Abdulla Brelvi: "Considerable misapprehensions among minorities (about) Constituent Assembly. Strongly urge clarification details, franchise, composition, methods arriving decision." I think I have said sufficient in the foregoing to answer Syed Saheb's question. By minorities he has Muslims principally in mind as represented by the Muslim League. If once the proposition that all communities desire a charter of independence framed by a Constituent Assembly, and that they will not be satisfied with anything else, is accepted, the settling of details surely becomes easy. Any other method must lead to an imposed constitution mostly undemocratic. It would mean an indefinite prolongation of imperialistic rule sustained by the help of those who will not accept the fully democratic method of a Constituent Assembly.

The principal hindrance is undoubtedly the British Government. If they can summon a Round Table Conference as they propose to do after the War, they can surely summon a Constituent Assembly subject to safe-guards to the satisfaction of minorities. The expression 'satisfaction of minorities' may be regarded as vague. It can be defined beforehand by agreement. The question thus resolves itself into whether the British Government desire to part with power and open a new chapter in their own history. I have already shown that the question of the Princes is a red herring across the path. European interests are absolutely safe so long as they are not in conflict with 'the interests of India'. I think this expression finds place in the Irwin-Gandhi Pact.

Look at the question from any standpoint you like, it will be found that the way to democratic Swaraj lies only through a properly constituted Assembly call it by whatever name you like. All resources must, therefore, be exhausted to reach the Constituent Assembly before direct action is thought of. A stage may be reached when direct action may become the necessary prelude to the Constituent Assembly. That stage is not yet.

Allahabad, 19-11-39.



## SHRI C. RAJAGOPALACHARIAR ON CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

*November 15, 1939*

It is taken for granted that what the Congress wants is that the Congress and the League should be represented in the Constituent Assembly. This is a grave misconception. What the Congress has urged is not that either the Congress or the League or both or any other political organisation should be represented, but that a duly constituted electorate should send members to the Constituent Assembly, and that these should be charged with the duty and entrusted with the power to frame a final draft so that no party organisations or individuals at large may thereafter raise any objections or propose modifications. If an electorate duly representing all the peoples of India approve of the draft constitution, no self-constituted representatives can thereafter have the right to make counter-proposals and keep the issue alive. It may be taken for granted that in sending duly elected representatives to the Constituent Assembly the principle of separate electorates for such communities as desire it would be applied.

There is the problem of the method of reaching agreed conclusions. There is particularly the question of how to deal with dissenting minorities, since it may be taken for granted that absolute unanimity cannot be reached. The Congress wishes to proceed on the basis that a majority decision of the representatives of any particular community should be taken as the considered view of that community. As for relative evaluation, Mahatmaji has already stated clearly that the Congress stands for the position that safeguards for the protection of the legitimate interests of minorities should be such as would be satisfactory to the particular minority community. Otherwise we should be landed once again on British coercion.

As regards the States, it is a mistake to imagine that they are on a par with the minority communities. The States are today Governments, not peoples, for the Governments are

unrelated to the people of those States. They should be dealt with on no better footing than as unrepresentative provincial Governments. They cannot claim the status of minorities and demand an agreement basis. They should be taken as represented by what is called the Paramount Power which is protecting them and which is the same as the British Government. The latter may bargain for them. Reason should be the deciding factor as regards the requirements of the States and not feelings and apprehensions, nor therefore counting of heads, as in the case of minority communities. If the people of the States take the place of the rulers, the position may be different.

The immediate approach to the deadlock is generally believed to be negotiations between the Congress and the League. The tactic of the British Government is to bring this about. Of course many want this in sincerity. And there are people always busy with this. But the lesson that has been forced on us by experience of two decades is that unless the British Government first accepts the procedure of pledging themselves to accept agreed decisions, and that they will no longer play the part of encouraging deliberately or otherwise now one and now the other, there can be no successful negotiations between the Congress and the League or any other organisation. It appears fairly clear that it is only when it is realised by the contending communities that nothing can be got out of the British, but only out of one another, that the majorities and minorities will come to decisions and agreements on the plane of reason, commonsense and love of motherland. This is what Mahatmaji has been insisting upon, without which condition precedent, he says, the "seesaw" process is likely to go on. He has not backed the slogan of the Constituent Assembly for the love of a grandiloquent phrase. He has come to it, as indeed Pandit Jawaharlal came to it originally, only because of the bitter experience of the futility of attempting to solve things otherwise. They have found that the presence of a third power actively bargaining for each in turn, and suggesting or offering just a bit more, each time when reason threatened to prevail, is a fatal circumstance that postpones our destined goal of freedom, and there is no alternative to civil war but an assembly of duly elected representatives of the people to persuade all to

follow the dictates of inherent goodwill and reason and decide on that basis. Experience and not extremism—wisdom, not sloganism—has made Gandhiji so insistent on a duly constituted Constituent Assembly in place of either Congress or League. The objection to a duly constituted representative assembly instead of the irregular arrangement that has been for convenience and decency called Round Table procedure, comes mostly from groups and individuals whose opinion or their own importance or their ambition differs materially from the prevailing public estimate. The Round Table is too irresponsible to be of any use when we feel we have talked enough and must come to final decisions binding on all.

There is one subject on which the British for obvious reasons of propriety are not candid enough. They are unwilling to refer directly to the question of their own concrete interests in India, which in the present temper of nationalism they should be permitted to be reasonably anxious about. Instead of seeking a balance of power between warring communities to protect British interests, it is for the British to state what those interests are and what is the sort of protection they claim for them. It is no use confusing the issue with the theory of Trust or a high-souled concern for civilisation and orderly progress. It should not be confounded with Imperialist ambition or habit. It should be reduced to the minimum and stated in pounds sterling and provided for by agreement or arbitration by disinterested judges, say, three good Dominion Ministers. This could easily be made a preliminary to the constitution, I am told we can find precedent for this in the history of Irish affairs.

The question then is not how long it will take for the Hindu-Muslim negotiations to reach a settlement, but whether and when the British Government will yield to the demands of the nation. These demands, though put forward by the Congress, are put forward on behalf of the whole nation and good for Hindus as well as for Mussalmans, indeed for all who aspire for a life of self-respect and honour among the civilised peoples of the world. The British know very well the inescapable conclusion that this country must be governed by our own people and by nobody else. There is no way but democracy for a tolerably good government to be maintained under modern conditions. So they must yield finally and

leave us to ourselves. How many weeks or how many months or years they will take to make up their minds on the present crisis is somewhat of a difficult question to answer. Mahatmaji expects it will take a few months. For the time being he counsels patience for several reasons which are convincing. Meanwhile we should be busy. We cannot remain idle. A mere programme of meetings is hardly different from idleness.

Mahatmaji has stated, and some people have heaved a sigh of relief, that civil resistance is impracticable with a nation divided on communal lines over the question. But action need not necessarily take the form of civil resistance of the kind that is deemed impracticable owing to these circumstances. It is impossible that millions of good and energetic men can be arbitrarily governed under existing conditions with the psychology and the ideas that have been developed during the eventful period we have passed. There will be a burst up of some kind if nothing is done or it is too long delayed. Internal quarrels cannot satisfy people for a long time, however foolish they may be.

We may not expect the Governor to take the responsibility of extending prohibition or opening new temples to Harijans. But though I cannot speak on behalf of His Excellency now, I can confidently assert that the Prohibition districts will continue to be under Prohibition and the temples opened to Harijans will continue to be so open. I want, therefore, all non-official organisations in the Prohibition districts to put forth as much energy as before and vigilance. They should even try to put forth increased vigilance and enthusiasm to make up for a certain amount of natural deterioration in official work. Even as to the officials I believe that there will be no setback. I need hardly say that any reversal of policy is bound to be interpreted as a declaration of war on the Congress. We cannot, however, ask for loyal continuance of our policies unless Congressmen continue to exert and give every assistance in enforcing Prohibition. Congressmen, therefore, in the four dry districts have a special duty which they should continue to perform without any slackening or doubt or hesitation.

## PURELY MORAL ISSUE

By M. K. GANDHI

*December 4, 1939*

The following statement was cabled to *The News Chronicle* by Gandhiji:

Mr. Chamberlain is reported to have said, "If imperialism means the assertion of racial superiority, suppression of political and economic freedom of other peoples, the exploitation of the resources of other countries for the benefit of an imperialist country, then I say these are not the characteristics of this country." This is pleasing to the ear but does not square with facts. The policy adopted in Kenya, the clove business in Zanzibar, the Ottawa Pact, not to speak of the Dominions which exploit the so-called uncivilised races of the earth, do not show as if the imperial spirit was dead. Coming nearer home, is the Paramountcy over Indian Princes consistent with even elementary democracy, let alone death of imperialism? Princes are made and unmade not for India's good. Millions of Indians remain under undiluted autocracy by reason of the Paramountcy.

Also I fail to see why Britain's intention about India should be dependent upon Muslim, Hindu or any other opinion. The only opinion that counts is India's opinion, not even the Congress opinion. India's opinion can only be ascertained by the free vote of her people. The only true and democratic method is to ascertain their will through adult suffrage or any agreed equivalent. So far as the Congress is concerned, the people of Princes' India should be represented precisely on the same footing as those of British India. The Muslims and other accepted minorities may be represented by separate electorate, if necessary, and in the exact proportion of their numbers. They will determine what is required for their protection. In all matters of common interest a composite majority decision should prevail. If a better way than a Constituent Assembly can be found for knowing the will of the people, so far as I know the Congress will accept

it without hesitation. Neither the size of the country nor the illiteracy of the masses should be a bar against adult suffrage. The election campaign will itself be sufficient education for the purpose of broadly knowing the popular will.

The declaration of British policy about India is a purely moral issue, for freedom-loving India has neither the will nor the capacity to resort to armed revolt. Nevertheless, it is her right to know Britain's will about her. I am aware that Britain can impress men and money from India treated as her dependency, but she can get moral weight on her side only from an India conscious of her freedom. I am anxious, as a friend of Britain bound by many personal ties, that she should come out victorious not because of superiority in the use of arms but because of her will to be just all along the line. She will then have the true friendship and sympathy of millions of people all over the world who have become sick of the wanton waste of precious life and of the palpable lies disseminated to sustain greed and hunger for dominion.

Segaon, 4-12-39.

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### THE PRINCES

By M. K. GANDHI

*December 11, 1939*

Whatever may be said to the contrary I must continue to claim to be a friend and well-wisher of the Princes. For, my picture of free India has a definite place for them. And hence it is that I have been drawing attention to the weakness of their position as it exists today. The small Princes would do well to abdicate the powers they should never have possessed and the powers of the bigger ones should be regularised. I have also ventured to suggest the minimum required.

No one in his wildest imagination thinks that the people of the States will for ever remain what they are. They will fight for their rights either non-violently or violently. In

any case, the Princes cannot hold out against millions who have become conscious of their power, whether spiritual or physical.

If the Princes will not read the signs of the times, has the Paramount Power, which has 'rescued' or 'created' them, no duty towards the people of the States? Shri Pyarelal has examined this question and endeavoured to show, as the reader will find elsewhere in this issue of *Harijan*, that no treaty obligations absolve the Paramount Power from protecting the people against misrule, or compel it to recognise the Princes as co-equals with itself and free from all control. The very word 'Paramountcy' involves the final authority of the Paramount Power. The so-called treaties are not treaties between equals, but conditions and restrictions imposed upon those to whom they are given. They are so many grants made principally or wholly for the consolidation of Paramountcy. Lawyers will no doubt be found who would argue that treaties are solemn pledges which can be enforced by the Princes. How can a dwarf enforce rights against a giant?

Those who accuse the Congress of bargaining with England when she is engaged in a life and death struggle, do not know what they are saying. Anyway I can have no part in bargaining. It is against my nature. India's birthright may not be recognised today. It will be when the time comes. But the issue must be plainly understood.

I hold that, in the nature of things, it is impossible for the Congress to negotiate with the Princes directly. When the time has come, it will be found that the Paramount Power will have negotiated on their behalf with the Congress or whoever can deliver the goods. Princes must not be used or allowed to impede the march of India to freedom, even as the I. C. S., a British creation, cannot be allowed to do so. Both are bulwarks of the Empire, and both will either be found to yield willing assistance to free India or will be disbanded. This is not said to offend them. It is the naked truth. When Britain has shed imperialism, at least so far as India is concerned, it will be discovered that these two arms of imperialism were no hindrance on England's path towards the right act.

As I visualise the war at this stage, I see that it has not

yet commenced with grim earnestness. Both parties are discovering and inventing new methods of destruction, but both are, I hope, evading the terrible slaughter which must result from any serious impact between the two. Awful as the indiscriminate sinking of ships with the attendant loss of life is, it will be found to be insignificant compared to what will happen when the fight commences in right earnest. Meanwhile moral issues are being decided for the combatants, whether they will or no. I observe that British statesmen have now begun to confine the war aims to the freedom of European nations. Unless the war comes to an abrupt end, they will find it necessary to go back to the original aim of saving the world for democracy. This war with the gigantic preparations it has necessitated will force the parties to cover much wider moral ground than they have perhaps contemplated. The war may, therefore, ultimately be decided on moral issues. At any rate, the Congress, which has voluntarily disarmed itself and chosen the path of peace or non-violence, is engaged in bringing the moral issue to the forefront. And if it keeps patient, it may by its sheer insistence on the moral issue play an important part in preventing the impending holocaust. A clear perception of the problem of the Princes is a big part of the moral issue. I invite the Princes and their advisers and, last but not least, the British statesmen to examine it dispassionately and without the old bias.

Seagon, 11-12-39.

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### LORD ZETLAND'S STATEMENT IN HOUSE OF LORDS

*December 14, 1939*

Making a statement in the House of Lords Lord Zetland said:

In spite of the efforts of German propaganda carried on by broadcasting and such other means, as are open to



them, the Princes and the people of India continue to express in no uncertain terms their detestation of the crimes of Nazi Germany against all laws of God and man. The Viceroy's war purposes fund for which no appeal has so far been made either by the Viceroy or by the Governors and which consists therefore of voluntary contributions spontaneously made, amounts now to a sum of £750,000. Among the contributions earmarked by their donors for special purposes Your Lordships may be interested to know of the gift of £7,500 by the Maharaja of Gondal for the dependents of those who were lost in the "Royal Oak". You will have heard already of the munificent gift of His Exalted Highness the Nizam of Hyderabad of £100,000 to the Air Ministry to provide a Hyderabad squadron for aerial warfare. Another special donation is a lakh of rupees by His Highness the Nawab of Rampur for motor ambulances, one only of the number of similar gifts. These are but examples which it would be easy to multiply.

Lord Zetland added "for the benefit of German propagandists who spend much time in explaining to the world the miserable plight of the Indian people under the rapacious tyranny of Great Britain I feel moved to add a single example of the feelings of Indian peasantry themselves in the matter. In one district of the Punjab, with a few people of wealth among its residents, the Governor was recently handed a wholly unsolicited gift of rupees seventeen thousand, all in currency notes, to aid in overthrowing Nazi Germany. Such things speak for themselves. I make a free gift of this item of information to the German gentleman known as Lord Haw Haw for inclusion in his next broadcast. A number of Princes have not been content to limit their financial assistance to lump sums of money, but are contributing percentages of their incomes for the period of war. Some of them, with great fighting traditions behind them have placed their forces at the disposal of His Majesty and have shown keen anxiety themselves to play a part in the actual field of battle; a gesture, which is greatly appreciated by His Majesty's Government, even if it is not possible in the present circumstances to take advantage of their desires in this regard. Offers of additional battalions of troops over and above the State earmarked units have been made by Their Highnesses

of Kashmir and Bikaner. Similarly among martial races, particularly in the Punjab, there has been a spontaneous and eager desire to enlist in the armed forces of the Crown.

In the political field I regret to say that difficulties with which your lordships are familiar persist. In the Punjab and in the Bengal and in the Sind the Governments and legislatures are functioning normally and with success. In Assam, where the Ministry under a Congress Prime Minister resigned an alternative Government under Sir Syed Muhammad Saadulla, a former Prime Minister has accepted office; but in the remaining seven provinces in which the Congress Ministries were in office, the administration has been taken over by the Governors with the result that wholly contrary to our desires the hands of the clock have been put back thirty years to before the days of the Minto-Morley constitution. I should add for the information of your lordships that the transition has been effected smoothly; that there has been no reversal of policy in any important respect and that broadly speaking, the measures promoted by the Ministries and assented to by the Legislatures before they resigned, are being given effect to by the Governors.

Since I last addressed your lordships on the matter there has been a further meeting of the Working Committee of the Congress and a further statement of their position. There is a sentence contained in it, which I warmly welcome; it runs as follows—'it is inherent in every form of Satyagraha'—that is to say passive resistance—'that no effort is spared to achieve an honourable settlement with an opponent.' That I need hardly say is what we ourselves most earnestly desire.

What then, you may ask, stands in the way? Not the least of the obstacles is difference of opinion between the Congress and the Moslem League as to the relations of the Congress and what for want of better term are described compendiously as minorities. The nature of this difference is well illustrated by another sentence in the most recent statement by the Congress Working Committee, which runs as follows—'The Committee wish to declare that no communal considerations arise in meeting the demands of the Congress.' I am sure they are sincere in holding that belief; nevertheless, it is one which His Majesty's Government are

unable to share. In their view no constitution could be expected to function successfully, which did not meet with the general assent of the minorities, who had to live under it. I am not, of course, in any way, intending to minimise the importance of such sections of the population as the scheduled castes, or indeed, of any other minority, when I say that by far the most important of the so-called minority communities are the Moslems. I am well aware that I need hardly say that there are Moslems to be found in the ranks of the Congress yet the fact remains that of the four hundred eighty-two Moslems elected to the lower Chambers of the Provincial Legislatures at the last general election only 26 stood as Congressmen and Mr. Gandhi himself has stated that the All-India Moslem League is undoubtedly the largest organisation representing Moslems, though he also speaks of Moslem bodies, which deny its claim to represent them.

There is a further consideration to be borne in mind. We speak of Moslems as a minority, because on a purely arithmetical basis they are less in number than the Hindus. But they are a community of from eighty to ninety millions with race memories of days, when for 200 years the Moghul dynasty ruled over a greater part of the Indian sub-continent. They have behind them a tradition of military service, which persists to this day and is exemplified by the high proportion of the Indian army, which they fill. I have recalled these facts because they make it clear that minorities of Europe present us with no full analogy and God knows, minorities of Europe have been a source of sufficient trouble in the world of to-day.

I observe that Mr. Gandhi himself in his paper "Harijan" of November 25 speaks of summoning a Constituent Assembly 'subject to safeguards to the satisfaction of minorities'; and he goes on to say—'the expression, satisfaction of minorities, may be regarded as vague. It can be defined beforehand by agreement.' We too regard it as essential for constitutional advance by whatever means, advance is to be obtained—that assent of minorities should be secured as far as is possible by agreement. But it is not within our power to impose an agreement upon them; that can only be reached by Indians themselves.

It was with a view to promoting discussion to that

end between the leaders of the Congress and of the All-India Moslem League that they were invited by the Viceroy, not long since to meet one another.

I would appeal to the leaders of the Congress as the largest and most powerful political organisation in India to endeavour to understand the difficulties which are responsible for the attitude of the All-India Moslem League. How great is the need for such an understanding is shown by the instruction issued a few days ago by the President of the All-India Moslem League to the Moslems throughout India to observe 22nd of this month as 'Day of Deliverance and Thanksgiving' that the Congress Governments ceased to function.' I would equally appeal to the President of the All-India Moslem League to consider the effect of such action upon the relations between the two communities generally and also between the Congress and the All-India Moslem League. Will they not call a truce in order that there may be free and friendly discussion between them with a view to reaching that agreement, of which Mr. Gandhi has written? I derive some little encouragement from the report, which has reached me that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr. Jinnah have arranged to meet one another for further discussion.

That is all to the good and I venture to hope that they may cover a wide field for I am convinced that so long as the legislatures are divided on communal rather than on political lines so long will serious difficulty be experienced in the working of democratic institutions with success. What we have to aim at is a state of affairs under which the legislator will think of himself as an Indian first and as Hindu or Moslem afterwards. When that has been achieved the greatest stumbling block in the way of India's progress will have been removed.

There are, of course, other matters which have to be taken into account. There is the defence of India, our obligations to the Princes and the position which our own people have built up in India by the enterprise of generations, to mention only some of them. But the supreme problem of the moment is that of minorities and it is for this reason that I confine myself to it this afternoon.

Let me, however, conclude as I began with an assurance to your lordships that, while there are these internal

difficulties, they do not lessen the abhorrence with which men of all creeds and communities in India view the Nazi system against which we have taken up arms. I have noticed an attempt on the part of the German propaganda department to propagate the idea that Indians should look to Nazi Germany for their freedom. The conception of 'Hitler the liberator' is so grotesque as to bring a smile to the face of anyone except possibly a German and if Hitler and his associates imagine that they may look for aid from India they are heading for one of the greatest disillusionments of their lives.

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## STATEMENT OF PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU ON LORD ZETLAND'S STATEMENT

Lord Zetland occupies a high office. But many of his recent utterances can hardly be termed responsible or helpful. I have no desire to discuss his latest speech in any detail. He has raised some novel points and arguments and laid stress on the minorities question specially. No one in India can possibly ignore this question and all of us are obviously desirous of solving it to the satisfaction of the various parties concerned.

How is it to be solved within the context of democracy? Obviously, the fundamental principles governing any consideration of any aspect of the Indian problem are democracy and unity of India. The suggestion put forward by the Congress that all these matters should be decided by a Constituent Assembly meets in principle all the difficulties raised. This does not mean that all our problems are simple of solution or that there will not be complications and difficulties to face. But it does offer not only a suitable method but the only way within the context of democracy. The mass of people by adult suffrage elect their representatives; all the principal minorities are represented and have a voice in the shaping of India's future. In regard to their particular problems it may be said that a minority's rights might be over-ridden by majority vote. That has been got over by the suggestion that

such rights should be settled by agreements. If there is no agreement about a specific issue then the only proper course is to refer it to an independent arbitration such as the League of Nations or the International Court at the Hague.

Nothing could be fairer than this and no minority can possibly object to it. It avoids the possibility of the majority forcing its will on a minority in regard to the minorities' special rights and interests. It avoids also the absurdity of a minority imposing its will on a majority. The importance of the Constituent Assembly procedure is to get the real opinion of the masses, Hindus, Muslims, sikhs etc., through their elected representatives. The question does not arise then of who the Congress represents or the Muslim League or any other party. If these organisations command the confidence of the people their nominees will be elected to the Constituent Assembly.

I agree with Lord Zetland that it is a little absurd to consider the Moslems in India as a minority. Not only their great numbers but the fact that in large areas of the country they are in a majority makes it clear that no minority question really arises. Ordinarily speaking, such numbers warrant no protection as they can well look after their own interests. As a matter of fact, in predominantly Moslem areas like the Punjab, Bengal, Sind, the N. W. F. P. and Baluchistan the minorities are non-Muslims and many of them have demanded protection. If India is looked at as a whole these various factors balance one another and prevent misbehaviour of any religious or racial group.

Lord Zetland unfortunately still thinks in terms of a bygone age and has a semi-feudal outlook on life. He does not realise that new forces are convulsing India. Even among the Muslims the mass of the people are claiming their own rights from their upper class and sometimes their semi-feudal leaders. The problems of India are essentially economic though a continuous attempt is made and has again been made by Lord Zetland to make them appear to be racial and minority problems. Lord Zetland possibly still thinks of the Princes of India as the hereditary rulers and of the Rajputs and other classes as the obvious military class. But things are very different in the India of to-day and all this attempt to hide the real issues cannot last long in this dynamic situation.

I can well understand the opposition of the British Government to the idea of the Constituent Assembly because such an Assembly necessarily puts an end to British Imperialism. Between the position of Indian nationalism and that of British imperialism there is no common factor. If the British Government is unable to agree to India determining her future we are equally unable to agree to the British Government interfering in any way in such a decision. We agree to differ and the future will decide whose will prevails. But I cannot understand how in reason any individual or group in India, standing for Indian freedom, more specially standing for real democracy in India, can oppose the Constituent Assembly conception. Are they afraid of going to the electorate? The only alternative to this is that they prefer British rule or interference with Indian freedom. There is no other way of having a free constitution to India and every other method involves a measure of dictation from abroad. The alternatives are, as previously stated, continuation of British domination and the development, sporadically or otherwise of Sovietism in India. I do not know how the mass of Indian people will decide in the particular matter but I am prepared to leave it to them and take the risk. The days of small groups at the top deciding the fate of India cannot last.

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### SHRI C. RAJAGOPALACHARIAR'S REPLY TO LORD ZETLAND

It is difficult to believe that with such ability of understanding as the Secretary of State undoubtedly possesses, he could have missed otherwise than deliberately the principal point in Gandhiji's plea. Gandhiji asks for British help in the settlement of what has been called the communal differences, by terminating what he has called the 'see-saw' process which prevents settlement. He has asked that Britain should not remain uncommitted but should decide once for all that the question of the constitution of India be remitted to a duly elected Indian Assembly of representatives of all communities, it being understood that the interests of

minorities should be safeguarded as far as possible by agreement rather than by majority vote. The Secretary of State leads that it is not within his power to impose an agreement and that it could only be reached by Indians themselves.

This is just what Gandhiji wants to be allowed to be done, but it cannot be done if Britain refuses to commit herself in any way but contents herself by asking the majority to make up with a minority, who, therefore, feel no call to be reasonable.

Referring to Gandhiji's suggestion that a Constituent Assembly should be summoned subject to safeguards to the satisfaction of minorities, Lord Zetland says that the British Government also regard it as essential for constitutional advance, 'by whatever means it is to be obtained,' that the assent of the minorities should be secured. The means makes all the difference for getting the assent of the minorities. The Secretary of State wants an agreement beforehand to be reached by party organisations and hesitates to agree to convene an assembly of elected representatives with an instruction to come to an agreement which shall be final and binding. For some reason or other the British Government turn the blind eye to the essential point.

I am glad that the Secretary of State has made it clear that 'so long as the legislatures are divided on communal rather than on political lines, so long will serious difficulties be experienced in the working of democratic institutions with success.' I hope that this observation which confirms the definite conclusions of the British Government in 1935 does not merely convey an explanation for refusing to go forward, but indicates a definite policy on the part of the British Government to foster nationalism as distinguished from the encouragement of communal divisions.

It is heartening to read that the Secretary of State "warmly welcomes" the statement of the Congress Working Committee that before any Satyagraha is undertaken no effort would be spared to achieve an honourable settlement. He says that this was also the British Government's most earnest desire. Let us hope that they are examining, therefore, the demand made for a definite commission to a duly elected official body of representatives of the people of India to frame their own constitution.



Difficulties expressed as regards the absence of details as to the nature and constitution of the Assembly cannot really stand in the way of a pronouncement of policy. There is enough talent available to British Government, if once they agree to remit the question to a Constituent Assembly, for framing all the necessary details. No one will quarrel over the details if the principle is really and definitely agreed to.

The Secretary of State has stated in Parliament that there has been no reversal of policy in any important respect since the assumption of administration by Governors and that, broadly speaking, the measures promoted by the Ministries before they resigned are being given effect to by the Governors. This statement of fact, let us hope, also enunciates a policy which will be strictly adhered to in the future; for instance, I should say that there need be no difficulties in the extension of Prohibition with the revenues provided therefore by the Legislature.

I cannot help repeating what I have said before that Britain has the opportunity to do something infinitely better for India, for herself and for the world, than offering such explanations. It can give to India the right to frame her constitution, through her own representatives and help the communal differences to be solved thereby, rather than merely seek a defence behind them. Nobody in India looks to Hitler for liberation but we expect and ask that Britain should liberate India.

The principle of self-determination would become a farce, if any objecting organisation should be allowed to become an impediment in spite of the Majority's willingness to safeguard every right.

## GANDHIJI ON "THE MORAL ISSUE"

*December 15, 1939*

Clarification of Mahatma Gandhi's attitude towards the war is contained in a letter, which Mahatma Gandhi wrote to a 'western friend' in reply to his letter wherein he had

argued, "We, at the present exploited and subordinated peoples of the world, cannot afford to have the Germans win and I fear that, if she should, as a result of our refusing to be our share in obstructing her at this time, we could not escape our moral responsibility for the consequences."

Says Mahatma Gandhi in his reply:—

"I cling to an old superstition, if it may be so-called. When in doubt on a matter involving no immorality either way I toss and actually read in it divine guidance. I have no other scientific basis. To attribute residuary powers to God is a scientific mode, in my opinion. In this crisis, too, I have resorted to a kind of toss. If I had my way, you know what would have happened. That was not to be. The Congress way was not only not immoral, for it, it was the only moral way. Hence I kept myself with the Congress.

My object was and still is to push forth the non-violent way as it was in my own proposal. The Congress way made room for the interpretation you have put upon it. But I do not regard it as a condition. It is a toss. If the British intention is pure, says the Congress we plunge. The way to test the intention is to know the British mind about India. If it is pure, then it is clear that God wants the Congress to throw its whole weight on the side of Britain, so that ultimately the victory may go not to the strongest arms but to the strongest cause.

What you want is already at Britain's disposal. She draws men and money without let or hindrance to get these. The Congress won't tolerate violence, let us assume. Then Britain has nothing to fear from the Congress in the violent way. And I hold that considered from the non-violent standpoint, which, in my opinion, is the only point worth considering, it would be immoral for the Congress to give her moral support to Britain unless the latter's moral position is made clear. I do not lay down the law as you do about Nazism. The Germans are as much human beings as you and I are. Nazism like other 'isms' is a toy of to-day. It will share the same fate as the other 'isms.'

I fancy I see the distinction between you and me—you, as a westerner, cannot subordinate reason to faith. I, as an Indian, cannot subordinate faith to reason even if I will. You tempt the Lord God with your reason; I won't as the Gita says

देवं चैवात्र पंचमम्: God is the Fifth or the unknown, deciding factor.

In spite of our intellectual differences, our hearts have always been and shall be one."

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## INDEPENDENCE

By M. K. GANDHI

*December 17, 1939*

From a correspondent's letter I take the following extract:

While you ask for India's Independence you promise nothing in return. Don't you think a promise of active partnership would show a spirit of reciprocity and may well be given? Co-operation and interdependence is the law of life. India is in no position, even if it gets Independence, to be able to retain it. In Anglo-Indian partnership is our best hope, and a 'Constituent Assembly' on a wide franchise will only make confusion worse confounded. This work can only be rightly done by a few wise men.

In the first place, the Congress has not asked for Independence. It has asked for a declaration of Britain's war aims. Secondly, Independence, when it comes, will come because India is ripe for it. Therefore there can be no consideration to be given for it. It is not a marketable thing. It is a status. This, however, does not mean a frog in the well status. There may or may not be an alliance with Britain. My hope is that there will be. So long as I have a share in the attainment of Independence, it will be through non-violent means and, therefore, a result of an honourable treaty or settlement with Britain.

I must dissent from the correspondent's view that "India is in no position, even if it gets Independence, to be able to retain it." This is surely a contradiction in terms. The correspondent has involved himself in it because he thinks that Independence can be a gift from someone. India will never have it until it is able to keep it against the whole world.

The alliance with Britain will be not for India's protection but for mutual benefit. So long as she needs Britain's protection for whatever cause, her status will be less than Independence. We see the mockery of it going on in Europe today among the small nations. Their Independence is on the sufferance of big nations. I attach little importance to such Independence. So long as the basis of society is force, smaller nations must hold their status on sufferance. I should not be interested in India being in such a position. And India is not a small nation. I would far rather have India engaged indefinitely in a non-violent fight for gaining her Independence than be satisfied with anything less as her goal. She can settle down to peace only when she has Independence which she can hold against any combination. This is possible only on a non-violent basis. It may be far off. It may not be realised in my lifetime. It may even take generations. I have patience enough to wait. Joy lies in the fight, in the attempt, in the suffering involved, not in the victory itself. For, victory is implied in such an attempt.

I see no difficulty in a Constituent Assembly elected on a wide franchise. But I do in an Assembly of wise men. Where are they? Who will certify to their wisdom?

Segaon, 17-12-39.

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### THE WORKING COMMITTEE'S RESOLUTION ON THE POLITICAL SITUATION

*Wardha, December 18 to 22, 1939*

The Working Committee took stock of the political situation and passed the following resolution:

The Working Committee have studied with regret the recent pronouncements of the Secretary of State for India. His reference to the communal question merely clouds the issue and takes the public mind off the central fact that the British Government have failed to define their war aims especially with regard to India's freedom.

In the opinion of the Working Committee the com-

munal question will never be satisfactorily solved so long as the different parties are to look to a third party, through whose favour they expect to gain special privileges, even though it may be at the expense of the nation. The rule of a foreign power over a people involves a division among the elements composing it. The Congress has never concealed from itself the necessity of uniting the various divisions. It is the one organisation which in order to maintain its national character has consistently tried, not always without success, to bring about unity. But the Working Committee are convinced that lasting unity will only come when foreign rule is completely withdrawn. Events that have happened since the last meeting of the Committee have confirmed this opinion. The Working Committee are aware that the independence of India cannot be maintained, if there are warring elements within the country. The Committee are therefore entitled to read in the British Government's raising the communal question reluctance to part with power. The Constituent Assembly as proposed by the Congress is the only way to attain a final settlement of communal questions. The proposal contemplates fullest representation of all communities with separate electorates where necessary. It has already been made clear on behalf of the Congress that minority rights will be protected to the satisfaction of the minorities concerned, difference, if any, being referred to an impartial tribunal.

Congressmen must have by now realised that independence is not to be won without very hard work. Since the Congress is pledged to non-violence, the final sanction behind it is Civil Resistance, which is but a part of Satyagraha. Satyagraha means good-will towards all, especially towards opponents. Therefore it is the duty of individual Congressmen to promote and seek good-will. Success of the programme of Khaddar as an accepted symbol of non-violence, harmony and economic independence is indispensable. The Working Committee, therefore, hope that all Congress organisations will, by a vigorous prosecution of the constructive programme, prove themselves fit to take up the call when it comes.

## INDEPENDENCE DAY

Following resolution was passed—

In view of the present political crisis and the urgent necessity of preparing the country for the struggle that may be forced upon us, in the near future by the attitude of the British Government towards our demands, it was felt that the Independence Pledge for this year should be so framed as to help in the preparation already on foot. The following resolution was therefore passed:

The Working Committee draw the attention of all Congress Committees, Congressmen and the country to the necessity of observing properly and with due solemnity Independence Day on January 26, 1940. Ever since 1930 this day has been regularly observed all over the country and it has become a landmark in our struggle for independence. Owing to the crisis through which India and the world are now passing and the possibility of our struggle for freedom being continued in an intenser form, the next celebration of this Day has a special significance attached to it. This celebration must therefore not only be the declaration of our national will to freedom, but a preparation for that struggle and a pledge to disciplined action.

The Working Committee, therefore, call upon all Congress Committees and individual Congressmen to take the pledge prescribed below in public meetings called for the purpose. Where owing to illness or other physical disability, or to being in an out of way place, individual Congressmen are unable to attend a public meeting, they should take the pledge in their homes, individually or in groups. The Working Committee advise organisations and individuals to notify their Provincial Congress Committees of the meetings held as well as the individual or group pledges taken. The Committee hope that none who does not believe in the contents of the pledge will take it merely for the sake of form. Those Congressmen who do not believe in the prescribed pledge should notify their disapproval, stating reasons therefore to the Provincial Congress Committee, giving their names and addresses. This information is required not for the purpose of any disciplinary action but for the purpose of ascertaining the strength of disapproval of anything contained in the

pledge. The Working Committee have no desire to impose the pledge on unwilling Congressmen. In a non-violent organisation compulsion can have little place. The launching of civil disobedience requires the disciplined fulfilment of the essential conditions thereof.

## PLEDGE

"We believe that it is an inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life, so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any Government deprives a people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or to abolish it. The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe, therefore, that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or Complete Independence.

"We recognise that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence. India has gained strength and self-reliance and marched a long way to Swaraj following peaceful and legitimate methods, and it is by adhering to these methods that our country will attain Independence.

"We pledge ourselves anew to the Independence of India and solemnly resolve to carry out non-violently the struggle for freedom till Purna Swaraj is attained.

"We believe that non-violent action in general and preparation for non-violent direct action in particular, require successful working of the constructive programme of Khadi, communal harmony and removal of untouchability. We shall seek every opportunity of spreading good-will among fellowmen without distinction of caste or creed. We shall endeavour to raise from ignorance and poverty those who have been neglected

and to advance to every way the interests of those who are considered to be backward and suppressed. We know that though we are out to destroy the imperialistic system we have no quarrel with Englishmen, whether officials or non-officials. We know that distinction between the caste Hindus and Harijans must be abolished, and Hindus have to forget these distinctions in their daily conduct. Such distinctions are a bar to non-violent conduct. Though our religious faith may be different, in our mutual relations we will act as children of mother India, bound by common nationality and common political and economic interest.

"Charkha and Khadi are an integral part of our constructive programme, for the resuscitation of the seven hundred thousand villages of India and for the removal of the grinding poverty of the masses. We shall, therefore, spin regularly, use for personal requirements nothing but Khadi, and so far as possible, products of village handicrafts only and endeavour to make others do likewise.

"We pledge ourselves to a disciplined observance of Congress principles and policies and to keep in readiness to respond to the call of the Congress, whenever it may come, for carrying on the struggle for the independence of India."

## VICEREGAL COMMUNIQUE ON GANDHI-VICEROY TALKS

*New Delhi, February 5, 1940*

In response to an invitation from the Viceroy Mahatma Gandhi had an interview with him on February 5, 1940 on the present political situation in the country. The interview lasted for two hours and a half. The following communique which was agreed to between the Viceroy and Mahatma Gandhi was issued:



In response to an invitation from His Excellency Mr. Gandhi to-day came to see the Viceroy. A prolonged and very friendly discussion took place in which the whole position was exhaustively examined. Mr. Gandhi made it clear at the outset of the conversation that he had no mandate from the Congress Working Committee, that he was not empowered to commit in any way, and that he could speak on behalf of himself only.

His Excellency set out in some detail the intentions and the proposals of His Majesty's Government. He emphasised in the first place their earnest desire that India should attain Dominion Status at the earliest possible moment, and to facilitate the achievement of that status by all means in their power. He drew attention to the complexity and difficulty of certain of the issues that called for disposal in that connection, in particular, the issue of defence in a Dominion position. He made it clear that His Majesty's Government were only too ready to examine the whole of the field in consultation with representatives of all parties and interests in India when the time came. He made clear also the anxiety of His Majesty's Government, to shorten the transitional period and to bridge it as effectively as possible.

His Excellency drew attention to the fact that, as he recently repeated at Baroda, the Federal scheme of the Act, while at present in suspense, afforded the swiftest stepping stone to Dominion Status, and that its adoption, with the consent of all concerned, would facilitate the solution of many of the problems that had to be faced in that connection.

He added that the offer put forward by him in November last of an expansion of the Governor-General's Executive Council on the lines and on the basis then indicated remained open and that His Majesty's Government were prepared to give immediate effect to that offer.

Subject to the consent of the parties affected, His Majesty's Government would be prepared also to reopen the Federal scheme so as to expedite the achievement of Dominion Status and to facilitate the settlement after the War of the issues to which it gave rise.

Mr. Gandhi expressed appreciation of the spirit in

which these proposals were put forward, but made it clear that they did not, in his view, at this stage, meet the full demand of the Congress Party. He suggested, and the Viceroy agreed, that in the circumstances it would be preferable to defer for the present further discussions with the object of a solution of the difficulties which had arisen.

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## GANDHIJI'S STATEMENT ON HIS TALKS WITH THE VICEROY

*New Delhi, February 6, 1940*

The vital difference between the Congress demand and the Viceroy's offer consists in the fact that the Viceroy's offer contemplates final determination of India's destiny by British Government whereas the Congress contemplates just the contrary. The Congress position is that the test of real freedom consists in the people of India determining their own destiny without outside interference.

I see no prospect whatsoever of a peaceful and honourable settlement between England and India unless the vital difference is obliterated and England decides upon the right course, namely, accepting the position that the time has come when India must be allowed to determine her own constitution and her status. When this is done the question of defence, the question of minorities, the question of Princes and the question of European interests will be automatically dissolved.

Let me make this a little clearer. Safeguards for the rights of minorities is not only a common cause but a representative assembly of Indians cannot evolve a stable constitution without the fullest satisfaction being given to the legitimate minorities. I use the word legitimate advisedly because I see that minorities crop up like mushrooms till there will be no majority left. By the fullest satisfaction I mean satisfaction which will not militate against progress of the nation as a whole.

I would therefore in the event of differences refer them

to the highest and most impartial tribunal that can be conceived by human ingenuity. Its voice shall be final as to what will amount to the fullest satisfaction of minority interests.

So far as defence is concerned surely it will be the primary concern of free India to make her own arrangement. It may well be that India would want elaborate preparations and would want Britain's help if it is given to enable her to do so. Thanks to Imperial policy, unarmed India is left wholly unprotected except by British bayonets and Indian soldiers which British power has brought into being. It is a position humiliating alike to Britain and India. I am personally not concerned because if I carry India with me I would want nothing beyond a police force for protection against dacoits and the like. But so far as defence is concerned unarmed and peaceful India would rely on the goodwill of the whole world. But I admit that it is only a day-dream at the present moment.

So far as European interests are concerned the emphasis on the word European must be wholly removed. But that does not mean that a free India should be free to confiscate European interests or any other interests. There would be as there should be provision for reasonable compensation for any existing interests which are legitimate and not harmful to the nation. It follows that there can be no question of favouritism which is being enjoyed to-day by European interests. I would regard them as big zamindars or capitalists and they would be placed on the same footing as these.

So far as the Princes are concerned they are free to join the National Assembly which will determine India's fate not as individuals but as duly elected representatives of their own people. As Princes they are big vassals of the Crown. I fancy they have no status apart from the Crown, certainly not superior to the Crown itself. If the Crown parts with the power it to-day enjoys over the whole of India, naturally the Princes have to, and it should be their pride to look up to the successor of the Crown, namely, the people of India for the preservation of their status. I hope this will not be considered to be a tall claim made by me on behalf not of the Congress, not of any single party, but of

the unrepresented dumb millions. No claim made on their behalf can be considered too tall. I am myself an insignificant being. But I am supposed to have some hold over these dumb millions. I know that in every fibre of my being I am also one of them. Without them I am nothing. I do not even want to exist. I want on their behalf an honourable settlement with Britain without even a non-violent fight. My dictionary has no such expression as violent fight. Yesterday I put this view before His Excellency in as courteous and friendly language as I was capable of using. We approached the discussion as personal friends each believing in the other's sincerity. We understood each other and both recognised that there still existed a wide gulf between the position taken by the British Government as explained by him and the position taken by the Congress which I put forward though not as an accredited representative of the Congress but certainly as a self-appointed representative of the dumb millions. We parted as friends. I have no disappointment in me that the negotiations have failed. That failure I am going to use, as I am sure he is going to use as a stepping stone to success. But if that success does not come in the near future I can only say Heaven help India, Britain and the world. The present war must not be decided by a clash of arms but must be decided by the moral strength that each party can show. If Britain cannot recognise India's legitimate claims, what will it be but Britain's moral bankruptcy?

## APPENDIX I

### STATEMENT ON WAR SITUATION BY JAMIAT- UL-ULEMA

September 16-18, 1939

*The following resolution defining the attitude of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema towards the present European war was adopted by the Working Committee of the Jamiat at its Meerut session held on September 16, 17 and 18:*

Britain justifies its participation in the Polish-German war under the cover of specious arguments and calls upon its dependencies and colonies and other countries to assist it in its defence of freedom and democracy. The Viceroy of India has also appealed to Indians in the name of democracy and freedom to help the Allies.

The committee has given its most anxious consideration to, and has most thoroughly examined every aspect of, the present international situation in the light of the lofty teachings of Islam, the demands of patriotism and the highest principles of ethics. The committee has also examined in detail the arguments advanced by Britain in defence of its stand and the underlying motives of the British Government in going to war against Germany, in order to arrive at right conclusions.

So far as the present British policy is concerned, we are sorry to state that it does not provide any valid basis for encouragement for the Indian people. Looking at the first plea, that is, defence of freedom of nations, we are confronted with the happenings in Czechoslovakia, Austria, Abyssinia, and Albania, where freedom was wantonly sacrificed and the dictators carried on a campaign of fire and destruction and perpetrated all sorts of terrors and barbarity against those free people. Britain silently watched this spectacle. Even if it may not be proved that Britain was a party to the occupation of Abyssinia by Italy, it cannot be controverted that

Britain did not stand for the freedom of the weaker nations and allowed the German and Italian dictators to enslave them. Moreover, Britain is itself responsible for keeping many nations in bondage and has adopted a deliberate policy of violence and oppression to keep them in subjection and to suppress their struggle for freedom. We are faced with tyranny that reigns in India and Palestine. The bombing of Waziristan and other frontier tribes and the aggressive occupation of Hadhrament in South Arabia are facts which may not be denied. It is difficult to put any favourable construction on these events and actions on the part of Britain. Does Britain sincerely desire the freedom of nations and is it willing to defend the liberties of independent people?

On examination, the second plea of the defence of democracy and the extermination of dictatorships, is also found to be equally untenable. We fail to appreciate how Britain is concerned in the matter if the German nation is reconciled with dictatorship in its own country. After all, the German nation alone is concerned with the form of its government. Shall we understand that if there were a democratic form of Government in Germany instead of a dictatorship which has committed aggression against Poland, we should have justified the aggression just because Germany was a democracy? Is Germany's action in Poland any worse than the barbarities in Palestine at the hands of the so-called British democracy? Are we expected to justify the atrocities and bombing operations in Waziristan and against other independent frontier tribes just because Britain happens to be a democracy?

So far as India is concerned we are confronted with the latest exhibition of British democratic policy in the declaration of war by the Viceroy on behalf of India without even caring to consult Indian public opinion. In any case, we fail to understand why Britain involved itself in the horrors of a war in defence of democracy but did not care to defend the Spanish Republic and is not willing to establish a democratic form of government in its colonies and dependencies.

The Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind is committed to the democratic principle. It firmly believes that the principles which are enunciated in the teachings of Islam stand for a nobler ideal of democracy than the one demonstrated to the world

by the so-called European democracies. Under Islamic democracy the majorities and minorities live in perfect peace and security. The Jamiat pins no faith in the European dictatorships but it regrets to find that the British policy in this war does not reveal the slightest indication of love of democracy.

Looking at the third plea of supporting the oppressed we fail to understand why Britain did not come to the rescue of Tripoli, Syria, Abyssinia, Albania, Czechoslovakia and Palestine, which were no less oppressed than Poland, and allowed them to be victimised by the oppressors.

The fourth specious plea is the one relating to the fulfilment of promises and the sanctity of agreements. We are only too painfully aware of the continuous and deliberate breach of promises ever since the days of Queen Victoria, and even earlier, and in particular the breach of promises made by Britain during the last Great War. In spite of the repeated declaration made by responsible British statesmen regarding the territorial integrity of the various States which fought against them and the sanctity of the holy places of Islam, the victorious Allies dismembered the Turkish Empire and violated the sanctity of the holy places of Islam with impunity.

In its deliberations, the committee had to consider the whole of this background and has come to the conclusion that the committee cannot subscribe to these specious pleas or consider these arguments as valid. It has noted the fact that a number of Governments and individuals from amongst the Muslims have hastened to pledge their support to Britain on account of their political exigencies and for selfish motives and are now trumpeting these pleas. We fail to see how even they can efface from the hearts of the Muslims the memory of a continuous chain of events from the time of the Great War right up to the present and persuade a God-fearing Mussalman or a genuine patriot to support Britain in the present situation.

We have also to look at the question from another angle. We have to consider whether our co-operation with Britain in the war will help the best interests of India or the Mussalmans. We fail to draw any positive conclusions from historical antecedents. India made every sacrifice and underwent unbearable sufferings to help British imperialism during the last Great War, and prolonged its bondage in consequence.

What is there to assure Indians that helping Britain in the present juncture will secure their national freedom and that British imperialism in the event of another victory will not treat Indians with greater highhandedness under the cover of the so-called democratic reforms. We are alarmed at the recent amendment to the Government of India Act which has crippled whatever little autonomy was given to the provinces.

The Jamiat-ul-Ulema has always stood for the ideal of complete independence. It considers the securing of independence for India its religious, political and ethical duty.

Considering all these factors together, the working committee of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind finds no valid reason to support British imperialism in this war. It is the considered view of this committee that in the present critical situation the Muslims of India, in fact all Indians, should immediately unite to formulate a common policy and arrive at a decision which should be in keeping with our national self-respect and dignity. Herein lies the real guarantee of their freedom and emancipation.



## APPENDIX II

### MUSLIM LEAGUE RESOLUTION ON INDIA AND WAR

*September 18, 1939*

The following is the text of the resolution:

"The Working Committee of the All-India Muslim League appreciate the course adopted by H. E. the Viceroy in inviting Mr. M. A. Jinnah, President of the All-India Muslim League and apprising him of the position regarding the international situation resulting in war and his own views, to be conveyed to the Muslim League. The Working Committee have given their most earnest consideration to H. E. the Viceroy's views conveyed to them by the President and also to the pronouncement made by the Viceroy since the declaration of war by Great Britain as also His Excellency's address to the members of the Central Legislature on September 11, 1939.

The Committee are of opinion that the views expressed by the Council of the All-India Muslim League by its resolution No. 8 of August 27, 1939, in the following words: 'While deploring the policy of the British Government towards the Muslims of India by attempting to force upon them against their will a constitution and in particular the Federal scheme as embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935, which allows a permanent hostile communal majority to trample upon their religious, political, social and economic rights and the utter neglect and indifference shown by the Viceroy and the Governors in the Congress-governed provinces in exercising their special powers to protect and secure justice to the minorities and towards the Arabs in Palestine in refusing to meet their demands, holds the view that in these circumstances if the British Government desires to enlist the support and the sympathy of the Muslims of the world and particularly of the Indian Muslims in future contingencies it must meet the demands of the Muslims of India with-

out delay,' are the true sentiments and opinions of the Mussalmans of India.

The Working Committee appreciate the declaration of H. E. the Viceroy, which is in the interest of India and particularly the Mussalmans, that the Federal Scheme embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935 has been suspended. They wish that instead of its being suspended, it had been abandoned completely and desire to convey to His Majesty's Government that they should do so without further delay. The Committee desire to make it clear that they do not endorse the "Federal objective" of His Majesty's Government referred to by H. E. the Viceroy in his address to the members of the Central Legislature and strongly urges upon the British Government to review and revise the entire problem of India's future constitution *de novo* in the light of the experience gained by the working of the present provincial constitution of India and developments that have taken place since 1935 or may take place hereafter.

The Committee, in this connection, wish to point out that Muslim India occupies a special and peculiar position in the polity of India, and for several decades it had hoped to occupy an honourable place in the national life, government and administration of the country and worked for a free India with free and independent Islam in which they could play an equal part with the major community with a complete sense of security for their religious, political, cultural, social and economic rights and interests; but the developments that have taken place, and especially since the inauguration of the provincial constitution based on the so-called democratic parliamentary system of government and the recent experiences of over two years have established beyond doubt that it has resulted wholly in a permanent communal majority and the domination of the Hindus over the Muslim minorities whose life and liberty, property and honour, are in danger and even their religious rights and culture are being assailed and annihilated every day under the Congress Government in various provinces.

That while Muslim India stands against exploitation of the people of India and has repeatedly declared in favour of a free India it is equally opposed to the domination of the Hindu majority over Mussalmans and other minorities and

vassalization of Muslim India and is irrevocably opposed to any "Federal objective" which must necessarily result in a majority community rule under the guise of democracy and a parliamentary system of government. Such a constitution is totally unsuited to the genius of the peoples of the country which is composed of various nationalities and does not constitute a national State.

The Muslim League condemns unprovoked aggression and the doctrine that 'might is right' and upholds the principles of freedom of humanity and 'that the will of the strongest irrespective of right and justice cannot be allowed to prevail.' The Committee express their deep sympathy for Poland, England and France. The Committee, however, feels that real and solid Muslim co-operation and support to Great Britain in this hour of her trial cannot be secured successfully if His Majesty's Government and the Viceroy are unable to secure to the Mussalmans justice and fairplay in the Congress-governed provinces where today their liberty, person, property and honour are in danger and even their elementary rights are most callously trampled upon. The Committee strongly urge upon His Majesty's Government and the Viceroy and Governor-General to direct the Governors to exercise their special powers where any Provincial Ministry fails to secure justice and fairplay to the Mussalmans or where they resort to oppression or interference with their political, economic, social and cultural rights, in accordance with the sacred promises, assurances and declarations repeatedly made by Great Britain, in consequence of which these special powers were expressly embodied in the statute. The Committee regret to say that so far these special powers have remained dormant and obsolete and the Governors have failed to protect the rights of the Mussalmans under the threat by the High Command of the Congress that exercise of these special powers on the part of the Governors will lead to a crisis in all the Congress-governed provinces where they are in solid majority.

While the Muslim League stands for the freedom of India, the Committee further urge upon His Majesty's Government and asks for an assurance that no declaration regarding the question of constitutional advance for India should be made without the consent and approval of the All-

India Muslim League nor any constitution be framed and finally adopted by His Majesty's Government and the British Parliament without such consent and approval.

The policy of the British Government towards the Arabs in Palestine has wounded deeply Muslim feeling and sentiment and all representations in that behalf have had no real effect so far. The Committee once more urge upon His Majesty's Government to satisfy the Arab national demands.

If, full effective and honourable co-operation of the Mussalmans is desired by the British Government in the grave crisis which is facing the world today and if it is desired to bring it to a successful termination it must create a sense of security and satisfaction amongst the Mussalmans and take into its confidence the Muslim League which is the only organisation that can speak on behalf of Muslim India.

At this critical and difficult juncture the Committee appeal to every Mussalman to stand solidly under the flag of the All-India Muslim League with a solemn and sacred determination to make every sacrifice, for on it depend the future destiny and honour of the 90 millions of Mussalmans in India.